

Dispute Resolution Process



**Nicole
Rhine**

Most NALC activists know that our grievance procedure has another name, the Dispute Resolution Process. This is because our current Article 15 grew out of a joint experiment we began with the Postal Service in 1998.

Under DRP, the parties overhauled the grievance process. The parties set up joint teams at Step B to work together to try to resolve grievances that the local parties could not resolve at either Informal or Formal A. A grievance could not get to arbitration unless the Step B team reached an impasse, despite its best efforts to resolve the dispute.

I want to first of all thank all of our stewards and branch officers for de-

fending the contract day in and day out on the workroom floor. You all are the true eyes and ears of this great union.

I also would like to thank all of our dispute resolution team members for the work that you do. Being a member of a dispute resolution team is not an easy job. Just know that the work that you do does not go unappreciated.

Just as I have done at the beginning of the last three years, here are the latest nationwide results from the Dispute Resolution Process:

- Our 15 national business agents, along with the United States Postal Service's area managers of labor relations within their regions, are responsible for monitoring the Dispute Resolution Process. There currently are 67 USPS districts located in seven USPS areas. Of those 67 districts, 45 have Step B teams. There currently are 58 total "primary" teams nationwide.
- As of Dec. 4, the Step B teams nationwide had rendered decisions on 31,032 cases in 2012. In 2011, the Step B teams nationwide handled 35,067 total cases, and in 2010, they handled 34,114 total cases.
- The teams were able to resolve about 74 percent of the cases they received in 2012 (as of early December), while about 16 percent resulted in impasses. The remaining cases were either remanded back to the parties (9 percent) or held (1 percent).
- As of early December, there were slightly more than 3,900 cases pending arbitration nationwide.
- Of the 31,032 cases handled at Step B through early December 2012, slightly less than 22 percent were disputes over disciplinary actions. Of those disci-

plinary actions, 42 percent were letters of warning, 19 percent were seven-day suspensions, 14 percent were 14-day suspensions, 9 percent were emergency suspensions, and the final 16 percent were removals.

- Overtime issues accounted for slightly under 27 percent of the contractual grievances received by the Step B teams, making it again the top contractual subject in 2012. In 2011, overtime issues accounted for about 32 percent of the contractual grievances.
- A large majority of the Step B teams decided cases in 2012 within about 16 days on the average after receiving them, with 73 percent of their grievances decided in less than 14 days. A sudden increase in grievances from a particular area and even the types of case files that the Step B teams receive can

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cause teams to become backed up and untimely, so the numbers in your district may vary from what the majority of the teams are averaging. When a team becomes untimely, we must work jointly with the Postal Service to find a solution. We are continually monitoring the timeliness of all the Step B teams in an effort to have grievances decided within 14 days.

- Since the Dispute Resolution Process's inception, the parties had certified 429 letter carriers to be either a primary or a backup NALC B Team member as of December 2012. DRP training and certification is jointly conducted on a periodic basis at the national level; how often is based on the needs of the teams. Overall, there have been a total of 992 participants—from both the NALC and USPS—who have gone through the training since DRP began. The intensive week-long training sessions touch on relevant topics, including contract application, decision writing, computer-based research and dispute-resolution skills. To be certified as Step B representatives, students must be able to demonstrate that they can work diligently and cooperatively with their counterpart; use a computer to research a subject; write clear, concise and contractually correct decisions; and pass a final examination on their contract knowledge.