

# New duties, Part 2— grievance procedure



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Drass**

**T**his month's column will focus on grievances from the local level through Step B of the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP). I have been studying the Step B process across the country since I was assigned to help find ways to improve our grievance procedure.

I can report that we average about 700 Step B decisions being issued each week nationwide. This has been true since at least 2012. The numbers change a bit from week to week, but the overall average over time remains constant.

The overall numbers of cases across the country that are resolved and impasse at Step B of the DRP change a bit from year to year, but

they are too close to the same. We have averaged between 75 percent and 79 percent resolved and 12 percent to 15 percent impasse Step B decisions nationwide since 2012. The remaining grievances are split between remand and hold decisions.

**Some look at these numbers and conclude that the DRP is working well at Step B.**

Others look at the results in their individual postal districts, regardless of what the resolve and impasse rate is, and conclude that the DRP is broken at Step B. I believe the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

We currently have 75 Step B teams activated. They are housed in 52 postal districts. Now, I don't know anyone who can say they liked every Step B decision they ever received, but I think it's fair to say the Step B process works pretty well in many places. The NALC Step B representatives deserve a lot of credit and thanks for the job they do.

On the other hand, there are some places that have good and bad numbers where the Step B process doesn't work as well as in other places. There are a number of reasons why that can be true.

The intent of the Step B process is to provide fair and educational decisions in a timely manner. That is the rabbit I'm going to chase.

We have 10 districts that have averaged between 36 percent and 64 percent resolved and 26 percent to 53 percent impasse cases over the last two months. This seems like a good place to start looking at the problems that exist and trying to help make the Step B process work better.

Everything we do outside of choosing who the NALC Step B representatives are has to be done jointly. DRP is built

to be a joint process. We are talking to the Postal Service about creating some pilot sites designed to cut through some of the problems that exist. We have no agreements as of this writing, but I will continue to update you on this subject.

**The last area to look at is how the DRP is working at the local level.** The ultimate goal of the DRP when it was implemented nationwide well over a decade ago was to promote contract compliance in the first place, and when disputes do arise, to use the *JCAM* to resolve them at the lowest possible level of the grievance procedure (which in most cases should be the local level).

There are plenty of cities out there that follow this concept for the most part. There also are plenty of others where this concept is not followed at all. We want to provide you some tools that can help you in both situations. We have continued working on two projects that should help.

The first one is getting the new *JCAM* finished and printed. After all, how can you be expected to use a book you don't have? I had hoped to have this project completed by March, but that didn't happen. We got hung up with the

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USPS on one issue that needed to be resolved before we could finish the *JCAM*.

We resolved our differences in early May and now have tentatively finalized all the language in the *JCAM*. We are just waiting for one final upper-level review from the USPS and then we will be ready to start the joint process for getting the new *JCAM* printed. I hope to get the new *JCAM* out by the end of July or so. I'll report further on this in my next column.

The second project is to create a standardized shop steward training program that helps to give both new and experienced shop stewards the best chance for success in the grievance procedure. This project begins with finishing the new *Shop Steward's Guide*. This publication should be completed and printed in time for the convention. Other parts of our shop steward training program will take longer to complete. We hope to have this project finished by the end of the year.

**I look forward to seeing many of y'all in Philadelphia!**