

# Arbitration scheduling procedures pilot tests update



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**W**e have some early results from our pilot tests that have occurred as a result of our National Arbitration Task Force agreement Re: Arbitration Scheduling Procedures Tests that was signed on July 7. This agreement provided that the parties at the NALC regional/USPS area levels involved in each test jointly submit quarterly reports to the parties at the headquarters levels. We have received the first reports, so I thought it would be a good idea to provide you with an update this month.

As previously reported, we entered into an agreement with the Postal Service to conduct two independent tests regarding arbitration

scheduling. The goal of these pilot tests is to reach the point where grievances reach arbitration within 120 days of the appeal to arbitration by the national business agent.

The first test involves eight USPS districts in two NALC regions (5 and 15). The eight USPS districts are spread out in two USPS areas (Western and Northeast). This test provides as follows:

- The Labor Relations Service Center (LRSC) will provide the National Business Agent (NBA) and Area Manager, Labor Relations (AMLR) with available dates provided by the arbitrators without identifying the arbitrator.
- The NBA and AMLR or their designees will determine the cases (both primary and backup) that will be considered as scheduled for each date with the goal of fully using each date selected.
- If sufficient cases are not available to fully use all available dates, the NBA and AMLR will promptly notify the LRSC of the dates not used.
- The NBA and AMLR will jointly submit a quarterly report to the undersigned describing the progress of the test.

This test requires the parties at the NALC regional/USPS area levels to jointly schedule arbitration hearings with the goal of eliminating, or at least reducing, lost hearing days that occur due to late settlement or for any other reason. We chose places that generally did not have a lot of cases pending arbitration for this pilot test.

The eight USPS districts had a total of 45 open cases when we signed the agreement. Additionally, they have received 32 new impasses since the test began. That brings us to a total of 77 cases. Today, the USPS districts/NALC regions involved have a total of 17 open cases. Of these,

just seven are not scheduled for arbitration between now and the end of January.

**The second test involves two USPS districts in the Eastern Area and Region 11.** The test provides as follows:

- The National Business Agent (NBA) and Area Manager, Labor Relations (AMLR) or their designees will review and attempt to resolve all cases pending arbitration.
- Any cases left unresolved will be scheduled for arbitration.
- During this test, cases will be scheduled to be heard within 120 days of appeal to arbitration.
- If there are not sufficient arbitration dates available, the NBA and AMLR will contact the LRSC to facilitate requesting additional dates from the arbitrators.
- If an individual installation(s) has a significant backlog, the parties will make every effort to use consecutive hearing dates and/or simultaneously schedule arbitrators to reduce the backlog.
- The NBA and AMLR will jointly submit a quarterly report to the undersigned describing the progress of the test.

This test requires the parties at the NALC regional/USPS area levels to begin by reviewing and discussing all the grievances pending arbitration and request additional arbitration dates from arbitrators each month until they reach the point of achieving the 120-day goal of this agreement. We chose two USPS districts that had a lot of cases pending arbitration and a history of not reaching an arbitration hearing in a timely manner.

The two USPS districts combined had a total of 140 open cases when we signed the agreement. Additionally, they have received 66 new impasses since the test began. That brings us to a total of 206 cases. Today, the USPS districts/NALC regions involved have a total of 73 open cases. Of these, just 16 are not scheduled for arbitration between now and the end of January.

In my view, the first jointly submitted quarterly reports from each NALC region/USPS area clearly demonstrate that both tests are achieving the intended results. The question that remains is whether these results can be maintained.

We talked about this aspect of the pilot test when we were negotiating this agreement. As a result, we included the requirement for the parties at the NALC regional/USPS area levels to meet at least every two weeks to discuss new impasses. I think this is the key to maintaining the early success we have seen.

We have proposed expanding both tests to include more NALC regions/USPS districts. I'll report further on this as the situation unfolds.

**In closing, I wish all of you and your families a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!**