

Regional arbitration update



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I haven't reported on this subject since January, so I thought it would be a good idea to update you on where we are with regional arbitration. As previously stated, we want to reach the point where grievances are routinely scheduled for arbitration within 120 days of appeal to arbitration all over the country.

The last time I reported on this subject, we had 1,825 grievances pending arbitration that were not scheduled for arbitration. Today, we have 1,092 grievances pending arbitration that are not scheduled for arbitration.

Much of the progress has been made in postal districts that had the highest number of grievances pending arbitration. We also have several

regions that have reached the point of routinely scheduling cases for arbitration within 120 days of appeal. While this is all good news, it doesn't get us to town.

We still have too many grievances that are not being scheduled for arbitration within 120 days of appeal in some of the regions around the country. For a long time, we have been discussing this subject with USPS through the task force that was created by the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Re: Arbitration Task Force.

The national task force has reached agreement on two independent tests that will be conducted in multiple postal districts and are intended to ensure grievances are routinely scheduled for regional arbitration within 120 days of appeal.

The agreement was signed on July 7 and states as follows:

Re: Arbitration Scheduling Procedures Tests

Pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding, Re: Arbitration Task Force, the parties agree to conduct two separate tests concerning arbitration scheduling. The testing procedures are as follows:

Eliminate or Reduce Lost Hearing Dates (Hawkeye, Mid-America, Long Island, Northern New Jersey, Triboro, New York, and Caribbean Districts)

- 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.
- Eliminate or Reduce Arbitration Backlog (Northern Ohio and Ohio Valley Districts)
- 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.

The NBA and AMLR or their designees in both test Regions/Areas will meet at least bi-weekly and attempt to resolve all new Step B impasse decisions during this test. Any resolutions will be promptly provided to the Step B team that issued the impasse decision. Cases will continue to be scheduled for arbitration in the order in which appealed, unless the parties agree otherwise.

This test is effective for one year from the date of signature, unless extended by mutual agreement. However, either party may terminate this agreement by providing 30 days written notice to the other party.

The first test includes eight postal districts. (We agreed to add the Central Plains District to those listed in the original agreement.) This test places the responsibility of scheduling grievances for arbitration on the appropriate national business agent and USPS area. Currently, scheduling is done from a national scheduling center. We expect the results of this change to be that arbitration hearing dates will be used more efficiently and, in turn, grievances will be arbitrated faster than they are now.

The second test includes two postal districts that have a long history of arbitration backlogs. This test requires the regional/area parties to first try to resolve their pending cases. Next, they will be required to request additional arbitration dates as needed to be able to routinely schedule cases for arbitration within 120 days of appeal.

We expect both tests to work well and achieve the intended results. If this is true, I am hoping to get agreement to add other postal districts into each test as we go through the life of this agreement. I'll keep you posted as we go.