

# Arbitration scheduling procedures pilot tests update



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**O**n May 9, the NALC and the Postal Service signed an agreement to once again expand the number of USPS districts participating in the pilot tests that have occurred as a result of our National Arbitration Task Force agreement Re: Arbitration Scheduling Procedures Tests. This is the second time we have done this.

Originally, this agreement was signed on July 7, 2015, and the tests started with a total of 10 USPS districts in three NALC regions. We signed an agreement on Dec. 9, 2015, to expand the pilot tests to 18 USPS districts in six NALC regions. With the most recent expansion, we now have a total of 38 USPS districts

in 11 NALC regions involved in both pilot tests.

As previously reported, the goal of these pilot tests is to get to the point where grievances reach arbitration within 120 days of the appeal to arbitration by the national business agent. I can report that both tests are achieving the desired results.

## The first 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 level 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 do not currently have a lot of cases pending arbitration for this pilot test.

The USPS districts now involved in this test are: Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Rio Grande, Hawkeye, Mid-America, Albany, Westchester, Long Island, Northern New Jersey, Triboro, New York, Caribbean, Colorado/Wyoming, Arizona, Dakotas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Northern New England, Connecticut Valley, Greater Boston, Northern Ohio, Greater Indiana, Greater Michigan and Lakeland.

## The second 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 level 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 USPS districts that have a lot of cases pending arbitration or a history of not reaching an arbitration hearing within 120 days of the appeal to arbitration by the national business agent for this pilot test.

The USPS districts now involved in this test are: Detroit, Louisiana, Western New York, Ohio Valley, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Atlanta, Greater South Carolina, Greensboro, Mid Carolinas, Gateway and Central Illinois Districts.

**As stated earlier, I can report that both tests are achieving the desired results.** It remains to be seen if the newly added USPS districts will have the same results as all the others. My crystal ball tells me the results will be the same and we will add additional USPS districts to these tests.

Another question that remains is whether the results are sustainable. As previously reported, 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 level to meet at least every two weeks to discuss new impasses in these tests. This agreement (though not formalized) extends to all NALC regions and USPS districts. This has been true for the last six months.

I will report on the status of regional arbitration and the Step B process next month. In the meantime, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the national business agents, regional administrative assistants and arbitration advocates for all your efforts to make these pilot tests so successful thus far. I'm hoping for more of the same as we go.