

National task force update/review



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There were five national-level task forces created as part of our last contract. They are the Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process, Article 8, City Delivery, Dispute Resolution Testing, and Arbitration. As we continue to bargain for a new contract, it seems a good time to review the question of whether the idea of creating a task force produces actual results or just a lot of talk and wishful thinking.

The Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process, Article 8 and City Delivery task forces were combined into one task force with multiple objectives. This task force produced the concepts that later became the City Delivery Route Al-

ternative Adjustment Process (CDRAAP) and the Article 8 Equitability Test (an hour is an hour) we did in 22 USPS districts throughout all 15 NALC regions. There were all kinds of other concepts and pilot test drafts exchanged by this task force, but to date, those parts were just a lot of talk and wishful thinking.

I currently serve on the Dispute Resolution Testing and Arbitration task forces. Both of these task forces continue to function in their own way.

Admittedly, the Dispute Resolution Testing task force struggles. We have worked on projects such as an updated version of the *USPS/NALC Dispute Resolution Process Joint Questions and Answers*, which were last updated in 2009, testing redistribution of Step B cases to another USPS district to avoid alleged interference in the process, and planning a national Step B conference. I hold out a lot of hope that some of these projects will produce actual results in the future.

The Arbitration task force continues to build on the concept behind the Re: Arbitration Scheduling Procedures Tests first agreed to on July 7, 2015, that I have reported on several times. This agreement created two separate tests. The first test was called “Eliminate or Reduce Lost Hearing Dates,” and the second test was called “Eliminate or Reduce Arbitration Backlog.” We started with 10 USPS districts in three NALC regions and grew to 38 USPS districts in 11 NALC regions on May 9, 2016.

Our task force has been discussing expanding and combining the elements of the two pilot tests referenced above into one pilot test. I can report that we reached agreement on such a pilot test on Feb. 13. This test is called “Re: Arbitration Scheduling Procedures Test.” The relevant text of the agreement follows:

...[T]he parties agree to conduct a test concerning arbitration scheduling designed to eliminate or reduce lost hearing dates and arbitration backlogs...All Districts in the Northeast, Eastern, Cap Metro, Great Lakes, Southern, and Western Areas and the Sierra Coastal and Santa Ana Districts in the Pacific Area will participate in this test.

The testing procedures are as follows:

- The National Business Agent (NBA) and Area Manager, Labor Relations (AMLR) or their designees will meet at least biweekly and attempt to resolve all new Step B impasse decisions. Resolutions will be promptly provided to the Step B team that issued the impasse decision.
- The Labor Relations Service Center (LRSC) will provide the NBA and AMLR with available hearing dates without identifying the arbitrator.
- The NBA and AMLR or their designees will determine the cases (both primary and backup) that will be scheduled for each hearing date with the goal of fully using each date.
- Primary cases will be scheduled for arbitration in the order in which they were appealed, unless the parties agree otherwise.
- 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.
- If sufficient cases are not available to fully use all available dates, the NBA and AMLR may jointly agree to delay returning some of the remaining dates for new appeals and will promptly notify the LRSC of the dates not used. In no case will the LRSC be notified of an unused date less than 45 days in advance of the proposed hearing date.

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.

This pilot test includes 61 USPS districts throughout all 15 NALC regions. We will see how things go, but I think this is another step toward reaching our goal of all disputes being scheduled for hearing within 120 days of appeal to arbitration.

In the end, I think the idea of creating national-level task forces can produce actual results for letter carriers. There is no question that you chase a lot of rabbits along the way, but actual results can be achieved.

In closing, I want to let you know that as of this writing, we still have some space available in our April 2-7 session of the Advanced Formal Step A and Beyond training seminar. If you are interested in attending, please contact Mark Sims at 202-423-2423 or me at 202-662-2842.