

NATIONAL MEDIATION BOARD

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The National Mediation Board assists in maintaining a free flow of commerce in the railroad and airline industries by resolving labor-management disputes that could disrupt travel or imperil the economy. The Board also handles railroad and airline employee representation disputes and provides administrative and financial support in adjusting grievances in the railroad industry.

The National Mediation Board was created on June 21, 1934, by an act amending the Railway Labor Act. (45 U.S.C. 151-158, 160-162, 1181-1188).

The Board's major responsibilities include preventing interruptions to interstate commerce in the airline and railroad industries; ensuring the right of employees to freely determine whether they wish to be represented for collective bargaining purposes; ensuring the independence of labor and management for self-organization to carry out the purposes of the Railway Labor Act; and providing for the prompt and orderly settlement of disputes in collective bargaining and over the interpretation of existing collective bargaining agreements.

Disputes arising out of grievances or interpretation or application of agreements concerning rates of pay, rules, or working conditions in the railroad industry are referable to the National Railroad Adjustment Board. This Board is divided into four divisions and consists of an equal number of representatives of the carriers and of national organizations of employees. In

deadlocked cases the National Mediation Board is authorized to appoint a referee to sit with the members of the division for the purpose of making an award.

In the airline industry no national airline adjustment board has been established for settlement of grievances. Over the years the employee organizations and air carriers with established bargaining relationships have agreed to grievance procedures with final jurisdiction resting with a system board of adjustment. The Board is frequently called upon to name a neutral referee to serve on a system board when the parties are deadlocked and cannot agree on such an appointment themselves.

Activities

Alternative Dispute Resolution In addition to traditional mediation services, the Board provides alternative dispute resolution services. These services include premediation facilitation, training, and grievance mediation. The purpose of the program

is to assist the parties in learning and applying more constructive, less confrontational methods for resolving their disputes and to resolve more of their own disputes without outside intervention.

Arbitration The Board provides grievance and interest arbitration for collective bargaining disputes. Grievance arbitration involves interpreting or applying an existing collective bargaining agreement. Interest arbitration is the process to establish terms of a new or modified collective bargaining agreement through arbitration instead of negotiation. Arbitration decisions are final and binding.

Mediation Disputes The National Mediation Board is charged with mediating disputes between carriers and labor organizations relating to initial contract negotiations or subsequent changes in rates of pay, rules, and working conditions. When the parties fail to reach accord in direct bargaining, either party may request the Board's services or the Board may on its own motion invoke its services. Thereafter, negotiations continue until the Board determines that its efforts to mediate have been unsuccessful, at which time it seeks to induce the parties to submit the dispute to arbitration. If either party refuses to arbitrate, the Board issues a notice stating that the parties have failed to resolve their dispute through mediation. This notice commences a 30-day cooling-off period after which self-help is normally available to either or both parties.

Employee Representation If a dispute arises among a carrier's employees as to who is to be the representative of such employees, it is the Board's duty to investigate such dispute and to determine by secret-ballot election or other appropriate means whether or not and to whom a representation certification should be issued. In the course of making this determination, the

Board must determine the craft or class in which the employees seeking representation properly belong.

Presidential Emergency Boards The Board has the duty of notifying the President when the parties have failed to reach agreement through the Board's mediation efforts and that the labor dispute, in the judgment of the Board, threatens substantially to interrupt interstate commerce to a degree such as to deprive any section of the country of essential transportation service. In these cases, the President may, at his discretion, appoint an Emergency Board to investigate and report to him on the dispute. Self-help is barred for 60 days after appointment of the emergency board.

Sources of Information

Electronic Access Information pertaining to Board operations including weekly case activity reports, representation determinations, press releases, and a range of documents and forms is available on the Internet, at www.nmb.gov.

Publications The following documents are available for public distribution: *Determinations of the National Mediation Board* (26 volumes); *Interpretations Pursuant to Section 5, Second of the Act* (2 volumes); annual reports of the National Mediation Board including the report of the National Railroad Adjustment Board; *The Railway Labor Act at Fifty*; and *The National Mediation Board at Fifty—Its Impact on Railroad and Airline Labor Disputes*.

Reading Room Copies of collective-bargaining agreements between labor and management of various rail and air carriers are available for public inspection At the Board's headquarters in Washington, DC, by appointment, during office hours (1 to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday).

For further information, contact the Chief of Staff, National Mediation Board, Suite 250 East, 1301 K Street NW., Washington, DC 20572. Phone, 202-523-5920. Fax, 202-523-1494. Internet, www.nmb.gov.