



RESOLVE



**STEP B DECISION**

**Step B Team:**  
USPS:  
**John R. Lomba**  
NALC:  
**Jim Ruetze**

District:  
**Rio Grande**

USPS Formal A:  
**Arnold Pena**  
NALC Formal A:  
**Ricardo Gonzalez**

Decision:  
USPS Number:  
Grievant:  
Branch Grievance Number:  
Branch:  
Installation:  
Delivery Unit:  
State:  
Incident Date:  
Informal Step A Meeting:  
Formal Step A Meeting:  
Received at Step B:  
Step B Decision Date:  
Issue Code:  
NALC Subject Code:

**RESOLVE**  
**G11N-4G-C 1710 8362**  
**Wyman Pylant**  
**421-873-16**  
**421**  
**San Antonio**  
**Leon Valley**  
**TX**  
**09/17/2016**  
**09/24/2016**  
**10/05/2016**  
**10/17/2016**  
**10/31/2016**  
**41.3130**  
**100271**

**ISSUES:**

Did management violate Article 41 of the National Agreement by removing the grievant from his hold down? If so, what remedy is appropriate?

**DECISION:**

The Dispute Resolution Team (DRT) mutually agreed to **RESOLVE** this grievance. The case file evidenced a violation. The grievant had successfully opted for a temporarily vacant duty assignment; as such he was entitled to work the hours and days of the opted-for assignment for the duration of the vacancy. Management is once again instructed to cease and desist failing to honor the opting provisions in Article 41. The grievant is compensated a lump sum of \$150.00. The payment has been made at Step B through GATS; no further action is needed to process this remedy. See the DRT Explanation below.

**EXPLANATION:**

The grievant in this case is Wyman Pylant, a City Carrier Assistant (CCA) assigned to Leon Valley Station in San Antonio, TX. The grievant was holding down Route 54013 at Leon Valley under Article 41.2.B.4 of the National Agreement. On Saturday, 09/17/2016 the grievant received a text message from Leon Valley management informing him not to come in that day, despite the fact it was a regularly scheduled day for route 54013.

The union filed this grievance to challenge the propriety of removing the grievant from his hold-down. Unable to achieve a resolution through the Informal and Formal A steps of the grievance procedure, the union appealed to Step B.

**The union** contends an employee holding down a route under Article 41.2.B.4 shall work the assignment for the duration of the vacancy. The union contends the vacancy had not ended on 09/17/2016, so the grievant should have worked it. The union contends none of the conditions required for removing an employee from an opt had been met. The union further contends management has been told in prior Step B decisions to cease and desist removing employees from their hold-downs.

The union requests management once again be instructed to cease and desist removing employees from hold-downs. The union requests the grievant be compensated for the hours he would have worked had he reported on 09/17/2016. The union also requests, in an effort to persuade management to comply with its requirements, an additional monetary remedy of \$250.00, or whatever the Step B team feels is appropriate.

**Management** contends this is not an ongoing issue at Leon Valley, so the union's requested remedy is punitive. Management contends it has been almost a year since the last opting violation at Leon Valley. Management also contends the grievant has never had his opting rights violated before this, so there is no reason to penalize management for this one mistake. Management contends it offered to pay the grievant for four hours, but the union rejected his offer.

The DRT reviewed the case file and determined management was in violation of not only Article 41.2.B.4, but Article 15 as well due to the prior Step B decisions in the file. The JCAM offers the following relevant language concerning Article 41 and opting:

***Duration of Hold-Down.*** Article 41.2.B.5 provides that once an available hold-down position is awarded, the opting employee "shall work that duty assignment for its duration."

***Exceptions to the Duration Clause.*** There are situations in which carriers temporarily vacate hold-down positions for which they have opted—for example for vacation. Such an employee may reclaim and continue a hold-down upon returning to duty (Step 4, H4N-3U-C 26297, April 23, 1987, M-00748). If the opting employee's absence is expected to include at least five days of work, then the vacancy qualifies as a new hold-down within the original hold-down. Such openings are filled as regular hold-downs, such that the first opting carrier resumes his or her hold-down upon returning to duty—until the regular carrier returns.

An exception to the duration cause for CCAs on a five-day service break between 360-day terms is addressed by the parties' joint Questions and Answers 2011 USPS/NALC National Agreement, dated March 6, 2014. The complete joint Q&As are found on JCAM pages 7- 20 through 7-30.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 2011 USPS/NALC NATIONAL AGREEMENT

**69. Will the 5-day break in service between 360-day terms end an opt (hold-down)?**

No.

**70. Does the 5-day break at the end of a 360-day appointment create another opt (hold-down) opportunity?**

Only where the break creates a vacancy of five workdays. In such case the opt is for the five day period of the break.

An opting employee may bid for and obtain a new, permanent full-time assignment during a hold-down. A national prearbitration settlement (H1N-5G-C 22641, February 24, 1987, M-00669) established that such an employee must be reassigned to the new assignment. If there are five or more days of work remaining in the hold-down, then the remainder of the hold-down becomes available to be filled by another opting carrier.

An employee on a hold-down assignment may accept a temporary supervisory position (204b). However, the hold-down must be reposted for the duration of the remainder of the original vacancy provided it is for five days or more. A carrier who

*has accepted a 204b detail only retains the right to the hold-down until it is awarded to another letter carrier.*

*An employee on a hold-down assignment may voluntarily terminate the assignment to accept a higher level assignment under the provisions of Article 25. In such cases, the vacancy must be made available for opting for the duration of the original vacancy, provided it is for five days or more.*

**Involuntary Reassignment and Hold-Downs.** *The duration provision in the National Agreement generally prevents the involuntary removal of employees occupying continuing hold-down positions. National Arbitrator Bernstein (H1N-3U-C 10621, September 10, 1986, C-06461) held that an employee may not be involuntarily removed from (or denied) a hold-down assignment in order to prevent his or her accrual of overtime pay (See "Eligibility for opting"). For example, suppose an employee who worked eight hours on a Saturday then began a forty-hour Monday-through-Friday hold-down assignment. Such an employee may not be removed from the hold-down even though he or she would receive overtime pay for the service week.*

*Article 41.1.A.7 of the National Agreement states that unassigned fulltime regular carriers may be assigned to vacant residual full-time duty assignments for which there are no bidders. However, National Arbitrator Mittenthal ruled that an unassigned regular may not be involuntarily removed from a hold-down to fill a residual full-time vacancy (H1N-3UC 13930, November 2, 1984, C-04484). Of course, management may decide to assign an employee to a residual vacancy pursuant to Article 41.1.A.7 at any time, but the employee may not be required, and may not volunteer, to work the new assignment until the hold-down ends.*

**Removal From Hold-Down.** *There are exceptions to the rule against involuntarily removing employees from their hold-downs. Part-time flexible employees and city carrier assistants may be "bumped" from their hold-downs to provide sufficient work for full-time employees. Full-time employees are guaranteed forty hours of work per service week. Thus, they may be assigned work on routes held down by part time or city carrier assistant employees if there is not sufficient work available for them on a particular day (H1N-5D-C 6601, September 11, 1985, M-00097).*

**Remedies and Opting.** *Where the record is clear that a PTF or city carrier assistant was the senior available employee exercising a preference on a qualifying vacancy, but was denied the opt in violation of Article 41.2.B.4, an appropriate remedy would be a "make whole" remedy in which the employee would be compensated for the difference between the number of hours actually worked and the number of hours he/she would have worked had the opt been properly awarded.*

*In those circumstances in which a PTF or city carrier assistant worked forty hours per week during the opting period (or forty-eight hours in the case of a six day opt), an instructional "cease and desist" resolution would be appropriate. This would also be an appropriate remedy in those circumstances in which a reserve letter carrier or an unassigned letter carrier was denied an opt in violation of Article 41.2.B.3.*

*In circumstances where the violation is egregious or deliberate or after local management has received previous instructional resolutions on the same issue and it appears that a "cease and desist" remedy is not sufficient to insure future contract compliance, the parties may wish to consider a further, appropriate compensatory remedy to the injured party to emphasize the commitment of the parties to contract compliance. In these circumstances, care should be exercised to insure that the*

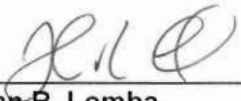
RIO GRANDE DISPUTE RESOLUTION TEAM  
10410 Perrin Beitel Road, Rm 1059  
San Antonio, TX 78284-9608  
PHONE 210-368-1760, 210-368-1784, FAX 210-368-8525

*remedy is corrective and not punitive, providing a full explanation of the basis of the remedy.*

Additionally, page 15-8 of the JCAM includes the following relevant language regarding Step B decisions:

*A Step B decision establishes precedent only in the installation from which the grievance arose. For this purpose, precedent means that the decision is relied upon in dealing with subsequent similar cases to avoid the repetition of disputes on similar issues that have been previously decided in that installation.*

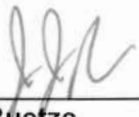
Based on its review of the case file, the DRT mutually agreed to the decision and remedy above.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**John R. Lomba**  
**USPS Step B Representative**

**cc:**  
LR Manager, SW Area  
NALC Region 10 NBA  
Rio Grande District HR Manager  
Rio Grande District LR Manager  
Management Formal Step A Designee

**Grievance File Contents**

PS Form 8190  
Union Contentions  
Written Hold Down Request  
Prior Step B Decisions  
Union's Formal Step A Notes

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Jim Ruetze**  
**NALC Step B Representative**

NALC Branch President  
NALC Formal Step A Designee  
Manager, Rio Grande District  
DRT File  
Postmaster, San Antonio, Texas

Weekly Schedule  
Request for Formal Step A Meeting  
Request for Information/Meeting  
Page 3 of PS Form 8190  
Management Contentions

**Payout Request History for Grievance  
17108362**[HELP](#)

<b>Not Processed By Payroll</b>	<b>Payroll Processed</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New (Not yet sent to Payroll)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paid (Back from Payroll without error)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pending (Not back from Payroll)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Payroll Error (Back from Payroll with error)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Submitted (Received acknowledgment from Payroll, awaiting processing)	
<input type="button" value=" &lt; Back"/>	<input type="button" value=" Show History"/>

**New, Pending and Submitted Requests**

Status	GATS Code	App Seq	Request Amount	Last Name	First Name	SSN	Relevant PP	Requested By	Date Requested	
New		2	\$150.00	PYLANT	WYMAN	0014	PP20 FY2016	DBRFJ0	11/08/2016	<input type="button" value=" Details"/>
Total New: \$150.00										
Total Pending: \$0.00										
Total Submitted: \$0.00										

**Paid and Errors from Finance**

Status	Error or Warning	App Seq	Request Amount	Amount Paid	PP Paid	Last Name	First Name	SSN	Relevant PP	Requested By	Date Requested
No Data											
Total Paid: \$0.00											
Total Error: \$0.00											