

Mission Statement

The National Mediation Board (NMB) was established by the 1934 amendments to the Railway Labor Act (RLA) of 1926. It is an independent, federal agency performing a central role in facilitating harmonious labor-management relations within two of the nation's key transportation sectors: the railroads and airlines.

The NMB is headed by a three-member board nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Although appointed for three-year terms, members may serve until replaced. The members self-designate a Chairman, typically on a yearly basis.

Pursuant to the Railway Labor Act*, the Agency's integrated dispute-resolution processes are designed to promote the following three statutory goals, enabling the National Mediation Board to effect its mandate to minimize work stoppages in the railroad and airline industries:

1. The resolution of disputes arising out of the negotiation of new or revised collective bargaining agreements.

2. The effectuation of employee rights of self-organization where a representation dispute exists; and

3. The resolution of disputes over the interpretation or application of existing collective bargaining agreements.

In order to realize these goals, the NMB Chief of Staff oversees an Office of Administration and two offices that house program areas: (1) Office of Mediation and ADR Services, and (2) Office of Arbitration Services. The Office of Legal Affairs constitutes the third program area and is overseen by NMB's General Counsel. For further information, see the Management Discussion and Analysis section of this Annual Report.

* The Railway Labor Act (RLA) provides a comprehensive statutory framework for the resolution of labor-management disputes in the airline and railroad industries. Enacted in 1926 as a collaborative effort of labor and management, the RLA succeeded several previous federal statutes dating back to 1888. The 1926 Act provided for mandatory Mediation and voluntary Arbitration of railroad disputes in contract negotiations, as well as for Presidential Emergency Boards to enhance dispute resolution. Key amendments to the Act in 1934 established a three-member National Mediation Board (NMB) and authorized the resolution of employee Representation disputes by the NMB. In 1936, the jurisdiction of the RLA was expanded to include the airline industry. The 1981 amendment to the Act permitted the creation of specialized Presidential Emergency Boards for collective bargaining disputes at certain commuter railroads.