

Key Points: • Union stewards have limited time but want to make grievance impactful • Clearly stating violation, facts, proper remedy puts ball in agency's court • Maintaining businesslike manner leads to more objective view of grievance

Presenting the grievance: an outline for union stewards

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BEST PRACTICE: Serving as a union steward is, for most, a part-time assignment. There isn't much training and there sure isn't an unlimited amount of official time to prepare for a representational activity, such as a grievance presentation. Stewards want their grievances to be taken seriously by management and expect a complete and thoughtful response. To achieve these objectives, it is important, when possible, to avoid vague charges that management was simply unfair, inequitable, or biased.

An effective presentation of a grievance, whether delivered orally or in writing, one that gets management's full attention, should look something like this:

Clearly state the alleged violation

The agency violated Article 31, Section C of the agreement when supervisor Smith denied grievant Jones' request for annual leave for the week between Christmas and New Year.

List the facts and argument

The agreement provides that when more employees request holiday annual leave than can be spared, those whose request had been denied the previous year will receive priority consideration.

Ms. Jones' leave request was denied the previous holiday season.

Several employees who were approved for leave this year had holiday leave approved the previous year. The following employees have been approved for holiday annual leave at least two years in a row (list names).

When Ms. Jones questioned her supervisor about the denial of the leave request, the supervisor stated that Ms. Jones had a "unique job" and could not be rotated with other employees.

Nothing in the agreement provides that the rotation system doesn't apply to "unique jobs."

Ms. Jones does not have a "unique job." The following employees possess similar qualifications and would be able to successfully perform Ms. Jones' duties for a week (list names).

State appropriate remedy

Because the holiday season has ended, the union wants agreement from the agency that Ms. Jones will be approved for holiday leave, if she applies, for the next two consecutive years.

Explain why remedy is proper

Two guaranteed years of leave approval is appropriate to make up for the improper leave denial for this past season and to put Ms. Jones on an equal footing with those employees who have been approved for holiday leave for two consecutive years.

Provide historical context, if available

A past practice exists by which Ms. Jones has been treated as performing the same work as other employees. This is a new supervisor who is deviating from the practices of the previous supervisor.

The section supervisor has made public statements critical of the rotational system contained in Article 31.

Why will this presentation get management's attention? 1. It's fact based. The factual assertions made by the steward can easily be checked out. 2. It's free of personal attacks on the supervisor (charges of favoritism), but it does contain argument that management must attempt to verify. Examples include: the agreement doesn't account for unique jobs; other employees are able to do Ms. Jones' work; and a past practice exists. In other words, it requires management to do some careful analysis and discussion rather than react to vague allegations such as favoritism. 3. The steward approaches the matter in a non-emotional, businesslike manner. This approach requires management to do the same and leads to a more objective view of the grievance.