



## NATIONAL MEDIATION BOARD WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

**TO: Railroad Referees/Neutrals  
Rail Carriers  
Rail Labor Organizations**

**FROM: Linda A. Puchala  
Chairman of the Board**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda A. Puchala", is written over the printed name and title.

**DATE: March 27, 2020**

**RE: Section 3 Arbitration Timelines**

As you are aware, the National Mediation Board (NMB) has temporarily suspended Arbitrator travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an alternative to face-to-face arbitration hearings, we are encouraging arbitrators and the parties to utilize video conferencing or teleconferencing to conduct hearings. I am asking the parties and the arbitrators to work together in making the transition to electronic hearings as seamless as possible by sharing your existing electronic meeting platforms.

Under rare circumstances, the arbitrator and the parties may come to the conclusion that an electronic hearing is not a viable alternative to a face-to-face hearing. In those cases, the current Section 3 requirements can be adjusted by seeking an exception. Exception requests can be sent to the arbitration mailbox at [arb@nmb.gov](mailto:arb@nmb.gov).

Unfortunately, arbitration hearing delays may stretch into months as none of us can predict when personal safety will not be compromised by face-to-face hearings. Thank you again for your cooperation in the successful administration all Section 3 matters.