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MSPB INITIATIVE WITH POSTAL SERVICE HELPS CLOSE OLDEST CASES

In the last six months of FY 2000, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) continued its efforts to close the oldest cases pending at MSPB headquarters by focusing on enforcement cases—petitions filed by employees to enforce the Board's orders in earlier appeals of personnel actions taken by their agencies.

Shortly after becoming Acting Chairman of the Board in March, Beth S. Slavet launched a new initiative to close all enforcement cases that had been pending before the Board for more than a year. At that time, there were 10 such cases, with an average age of 687 days. By the end of September, 8 of those cases had been closed. The average age of enforcement cases pending for more than a year at the end of September was 562 days—a reduction of 125 days.

Because Postal Service cases accounted for most of the enforcement cases pending when the initiative was launched, the Board paid particular attention to those cases. The 6-month results were even more dramatic for the Postal Service enforcement cases. In March, there were 6 such cases pending, with an average age of 777 days. By the end of September, 5 of those cases had been closed. The average age of Postal Service enforcement cases pending for more than a year at the end of September was 470 days—a reduction of more than 300 days.

"Staff members from the Office of the General Counsel held a meeting with headquarters officials of the Postal Service in March to try to secure their assistance in seeing that USPS managers in various parts of the country who are responsible for complying with Board orders do so," explained Acting Chairman Slavet. "As a result of that meeting, a USPS headquarters official has been designated to act as a liaison for compliance. The Board now advises the USPS liaison when it receives an administrative judge's decision finding noncompliance by the Postal Service. The liaison assists in expediting the agency's compliance efforts, particularly in complex cases."

"The cooperation of headquarters officials of USPS was a significant factor in our being able to close these overage enforcement cases," Acting Chairman Slavet continued. "Having one person at USPS headquarters to deal with, who then deals with the agency's managers in the field, has been a great help. I hope that this approach will serve as an example to other agencies and that their Washington headquarters will take a more active role in ensuring that managers in their field operations comply with Board orders."

The Board is an independent, quasi-judicial agency with responsibility for deciding Federal employee appeals from personnel actions taken against them and for protecting the integrity of the civil service and other Federal merit systems. The Board also conducts studies of the civil service and other merit systems in the Executive Branch.

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