



NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ARBITRATORS

WHERE DO
WE GO FROM
HERE?

STRATEGIES FOR A
CHANGING WORLD

SEVENTY 79th NINTH

**ANNUAL MEETING
& EDUCATION
CONFERENCE**
MAY 20–23, 2026

INTERCONTINENTAL CHICAGO MAGNIFICENT MILE

CHICAGO
ILLINOIS



Welcome to the 79th Annual Meeting & Education Conference!

Welcome to Chicago! This year we return to a favorite NAA city, with a deep labor-management history, an active labor bar, and terrific after-hours activities to enjoy. Our theme – Where Do We Go From Here? Strategies for a Changing World – brings the morning headlines back to our daily work. Workers, management, in-house and outside labor relations experts and the arbitrators who assist in making sense of it all – we continually grapple with the most effective responses to new economic, legal and technological developments. The plenaries and concurrent sessions are intended to address all areas of interest: Expert panelists will help advocates and arbitrators alike consider our fast-changing world of work. There will be sessions tailored to arbitrators seeking to hone their craft and to advocates interested in advancing their skills in arbitration, and to informing one and all on trending issues. How can advocates and arbitrators use Med-Arb for more satisfying resolution of disputes? The Railway Labor Act is 100 years old this year – how did it develop as it has, and how does it continue to enable the railroad and airline industries and their unions respond to a world much changed from 1926? These and more await you.

In addition to sessions on such real world problems as the impact of AI on arbitration and arbitrators, current evidentiary quandaries for arbitrators, and the ever-recurring questions about “zero tolerance” in the workplace, we offer for advocates an “Advocacy Skills” suite of four interactive presentations: In addition to the “zero tolerance” program, we’ll have skill-building sessions on the care and handling of witnesses, the skill of “active listening” in arbitration preparation, presentation” and decision making, and an overview of a mock arbitration, with a certificate of attendance available to attendees who attend three of these sessions. We also plan to partner with the Ray Corollary Initiative (RCI) in a pre-conference event for newer and



developing arbitrators to meet advocates who are interested in expanding and diversifying their selection pool of arbitrators. On Saturday, our arbitrator-only program includes sessions on such issues as gender bias in arbitration, building an arbitration practice in this changing world, an update on developments in labour arbitration in Canada, media skills for arbitrators, comparative dispute resolution methods in Brazil, Ireland and the UK, and the results of an REF-funded study of public-school reform.

And with all that, you will still have time to socialize with new and old colleagues. Explore the sights, sounds, entertainment, and food that Chicago has to offer! Details on our traditional Thursday night Dine-Around and other activities to follow. We look forward to welcoming you.

THE HOTEL

The Academy's block of guest rooms at a special conference rate of \$229 is limited; rooms in our block will be available until April 20, 2026, or until our block is sold out, whichever occurs first. Attendees will be eligible for the conference rate of \$229 for a single or double occupancy only as long as rooms in the Academy's room block remain available. Room reservations may be made online (<https://book.passkey.com/go/2026ArbitratorsCon>) or by calling the InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile at 1-312-944-4100. Please be certain to request that your reservation be assigned to the "National Academy of Arbitrators" or "NAA" room block. Reservation must be guaranteed by a first night's deposit by a credit card acceptable at the InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile.

REGISTRATION

Each registration includes one non-transferable registrant ticket for the following events: Presidents Welcoming Reception, Thursday Distinguished Speaker Luncheon, and Friday Presidential Luncheon. Tickets are available at an additional cost for guests to attend all meal events. Guest meal tickets are transferable; registrant tickets are not. [Register HERE!](#)



CANCELLATION POLICY

REFUNDS: Only those cancellations received at the NAA Operations Center by mail, e-mail, telephone, or fax on or before April 20, 2026, will be entitled to refunds of the conference registration fee (subject to \$100 processing charge) and additional meal tickets.

CLE

Accreditation is being requested for this conference from states with mandatory continuing legal education requirements for attorneys. CLE forms will be available at the NAA registration desk. If you need more information, please contact the Operations Center, naa@naarb.org.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

NAA committee meetings may not be held during conference activities, including ticketed meal functions. Committee or Regional Chairs who need meeting rooms at other times, and who have not already scheduled space with the NAA Operations Center, must contact the Operations Center as soon as possible (Telephone: (607) 756-8363 or E-mail: naa@naarb.org). Time and space have been reserved on Thursday (3:00 pm - 4:00 pm) and Friday (4:30 pm - 5:30 pm) for Committee and Regional meetings. This space is very limited and will be available on a first-requested, first-reserved basis.

ADVOCACY SKILLS

The **Advocacy Skills** concurrent sessions are designed to address trending issues in labor-management relations and dispute resolution from the perspective of advocates and arbitrators alike. Once again, the Academy is providing a series of sessions specifically focused on skills for advocates in arbitration and will provide a Certificate of Attendance to participants who attend three of these sessions.



Program Details

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **New Member Orientation**

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. **Board of Governors Meeting**

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. **New Member Luncheon**
(By Invitation Only)

2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. **Meet the Neutrals**

NAA/ Ray Corollary Initiative (RCI) pre-conference event for newer and developing arbitrators to meet advocates responsible for selecting arbitrators who are interested in expanding and diversifying their selection pool.
(By Invitation Only)

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. **President's Welcoming Reception**

Thursday, May 21, 2026

8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. **Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Presidential Remarks:

Joshua Javits, NAA President, *Washington, DC*

Program Announcements:

Lisa Kohn, NAA, Co-Chair, Chicago Committee,
Chicago, IL

Dan Zeiser, NAA, Co-Chair, Chicago Committee,
Cleveland, OH



Thursday, May 21, 2026 (cont'd)

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. **Plenary**

The Changing Structure of Work: How is the workplace changing? How is it changing our work? And how do we respond?

The modern workplace is shifting faster than ever – from new technologies to evolving employee expectations. Join this panel as they explore what's driving these changes, how the workplace differs in the U.S. and Canada, and what it means for the practice of arbitration. A lively Q&A will follow to tackle your questions.

Moderator:

John C. Alfano, NAA, *Avenue, MD*

Panelists:

Robert Bruno, Professor of Labor and Employment
Relations, Director of the Labor Education Program,
Chicago, IL

Stanley T. Dobry, NAA, *Warren, MI*

Andrew J. Zeiser, Assistant Professor, Management,
Marketing and Supply Chain Department, Boler College
of Business, John Carroll University, *Cleveland, OH*

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **Break**



Thursday, May 21, 2026 (cont'd)

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Plenary**

Med-Arb: An Alternative Approach (The Good, the Risks and Why It's Worth a Try)

Curious about new approaches to labor arbitration? Med-Arb combines mediation and arbitration, offering both opportunities and challenges. Join this experienced panel as they explore when and how Med-Arb can be used, its risks and rewards, and best practices to follow. Gain insights from both U.S. and Canadian perspectives on this evolving process.

Moderator:

Jules Bloch, NAA, *Toronto, ON*

Arbitrators:

Mark Asbell, NAA, *Sherwood Park, AB*

Steve Bierig, NAA, *Highland Park, IL*

Union Advocate:

Jerry Marzullo, Partner, Asher, Gitter & D'Alba, Ltd.,
Chicago, IL

Management Advocate:

Amy Moor Gaylord, Partner, Akerman LLP, *Chicago, IL*

12:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. **Distinguished Speaker Luncheon**



Thursday, May 21, 2026 (cont'd)

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. **Concurrent Session**

College Sports: It Ain't Just Sports

College sports aren't what they used to be. Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) deals and new attempts to organize athletes are creating complex disputes that demand professional resolution. Join this panel of experts — two attorneys and an academic-arbitrator — as they explore the emerging issues, the future of college athletics, and the role skilled labor arbitrators may play.

Moderator:

Peter Meyers, NAA, *Chicago, IL*

Panelists:

Adam Abrahms, Morgan Lewis, *Los Angeles, CA*

Mike Leroy, University of Illinois, *Urbana-Champaign, IL*

Joshua Nadreau, Fisher Phillips, *Boston, MA*



Thursday, May 21, 2026 (cont'd)

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.**Concurrent Session**

Evidentiary Quandaries

To admit or not admit – that is the question. Should arbitrators take a flexible approach to evidence under AAA Rule 28, or follow the Federal Rules of Evidence to streamline hearings? Join advocates and a panel of seasoned arbitrators as they work through a fact pattern, present opening statements, rule on admissibility, and answer audience questions.

Moderator:

Richard K. Hanft, NAA, *Highland, IN*

Panelists:

Emily Jackson Hall, Hall ADR Inc., *Kasilof, AK*

Gina Rocanova, *San Francisco, CA*

Rebekah Smith, Seven Tree Solutions, LLC, *Camden, ME*

Union Advocate:

Zack Seiler, United Steelworkers, *Gary, IN*

Company Advocate:

Monica Lowe, Lowe ADR

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.**Concurrent Session**

Advocacy Skills: Navigating Witness Preparation:

Building Credibility from Start to Finish (*Attendees at three sessions will receive a certificate of attendance.*)

Witness selection, preparation, and presentation can make or break your case before an arbitrator. This session will help you put your best foot forward by ensuring that each of your



Thursday, May 21, 2026 (cont'd)

(Navigating Witness Preparation: Building Credibility from Start to Finish Session cont'd)

witnesses presents testimony that is effective and credible. Two skilled advocates and a seasoned arbitrator will lead this lively session, sharing tips and tricks from real-life experiences, both good and bad.

Moderator:

Kathryn A. VanDagens, NAA, *Lansing, MI*

3:00 p.m.....**Committee Meetings TBD**



Friday, May 22, 2026

8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. **Opening Remarks**

Announcements:

Lisa Kohn, NAA, Co-Chair, Chicago Committee,
Chicago, IL

Dan Zeiser, NAA, Co-Chair, Chicago Committee,
Cleveland, OH

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. **Plenary**

The Railway Labor Act at 100: A Century of Survival, and Evolution, and the Challenges to Come

The Railway Labor Act has governed labor relations in the rail and airline industries for a century — surviving economic upheavals, wartime pressures, and industry deregulation. Join this panel for a retrospective on the Act's endurance, its key amendments and judicial interpretations, and a forward-looking discussion on what the next century of transportation labor relations may hold.

Neutral and Moderator:

Ira Jaffe, NAA, *Potomac, MD*

Union Advocates:

Allison Parker, Transportation Communications Union,
New Market, MD

Richard S. Edelman, Mooney, Green, Saindon, Murphy &
Welch, Washington, DC

Arthur Luby, Senior Advisor and Chief Negotiator, Air Line
Pilots Association, *Tysons Corner, VA*

Management Advocates:

Aparna B. Joshi, O'Melveny, *Washington, DC*

Donald Munro, Jones Day, *Washington, DC*

Jeff Wall, Vice President, Labor Relations,
CSX Transportation, Inc., *Jacksonville, FL*



Friday, May 22, 2026 (cont'd)

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **Break**

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Concurrent Session**

Advocacy Skills: Zero Tolerance: Does Zero Tolerance Ever Mean Zero? (*Attendees at three sessions will receive a certificate of attendance.*)

“Red Light, Green Light: Where Rules Meet Judgment”

Zero tolerance policies sound simple—but are they? Join top labor arbitrators as they tackle real-world dilemmas, including fighting, theft, harassment, off-duty conduct, and more, exploring where strict rules meet human judgment. Participate in interactive discussions, vote, ask questions, and gain practical strategies for enforcing policies while ensuring due process.

Moderator:

Will Hartfield, NAA, *Dallas, TX*

Speakers:

Dean L. Burrell, NAA, *Morristown, NJ*

Sarah Espinosa, NAA, *Alexandria, VA*

Patricia H. McGruder, *Arlington, TX*

Lisa W. Timmons, Esq., Lisa W. Timmons, PLLC,
West Bloomfield, MI

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Concurrent Session**

Recent Legal Developments

The labor-management landscape has shifted dramatically over the past year. From executive orders to Supreme Court decisions and agency guidance, these changes may be among the most significant since the Wagner Act. Join this experienced panel as they break down the major developments, explore their impact on parties, arbitrators,



Friday, May 22, 2026 (cont'd)

(Recent Legal Developments Session Continued)

and practitioners, and consider which changes are likely to endure.

Moderator:

Dan Zeiser, NAA, *Cleveland, OH*

Management:

James C. Franzcek Jr., Franzcek P.C., *Chicago, IL*

Neutral:

Michael Z. Green, NAA, *Ft. Worth, TX*

Labor:

Robert Bloch, Dowd, Bloch, Bennett, Cervone, Auerbach and Yokich, *Chicago, IL*

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Concurrent Session**

Advocacy Skills: Mock Arbitration (*Attendees at three sessions will receive a certificate of attendance.*)

Did she—or didn't she? Only the arbitrator knows for sure. Test your skills alongside seasoned practitioners in this detailed simulation of a labor arbitration hearing in a private-sector discipline case. Observe experienced advocates present evidence, examine witnesses, and argue before a National Academy arbitrator. Attendees will have the opportunity to render a decision, ask questions, and gain practical insights into arbitration, evidence presentation, and decision-making best practices.

Moderator:

Sandra Mendel Furman, NAA, *Bexley, OH*

Arbitrator Panelist:

Rick Hanft, NAA, *Highland, IN*



Friday, May 22, 2026 (cont'd)

(Advocacy Skills: Mock Arbitration Session Continued)

Union Advocate:

Brooks Boron, Lemmerbrock & Boron, LLC, *Cleveland, OH*

Management Advocate:

Amanda Smith, Kastner Westman & Wilkins, LLC,
Akron, OH

Witnesses:

Lori Gallo, *Cleveland, OH*

Lynne Nowel, *Lakewood, OH*

12:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. **Presidential Luncheon**

Introduction:

Sabina Javits, *Washington, DC*

President:

Joshua Javits, NAA President, *Washington, DC*

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. **Concurrent Session**

Advocacy Skills: Active Listening for a Successful Labor

Arbitration (*Attendees at three sessions will receive a certificate of attendance.*)

Effective advocacy and sound decision-making start with listening to understand. In this interactive session, participants will gain practical tools for witness preparation and hearings, including active listening techniques—paraphrasing, clarifying, and summarizing—to uncover facts, and strategies to recognize and mitigate cognitive biases that can affect judgment and credibility. Real-world examples and checklists provide actionable strategies to apply immediately.

Presenter:

Will Hartsfield, NAA, *Dallas, TX*



Friday, May 22, 2026 (cont'd)

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. **Concurrent Session**

The AI Lab

Artificial Intelligence is everywhere, constantly evolving, and reshaping how we work. Don't get left behind – join this hands-on session to explore AI applications in a collaborative "laboratory" setting. Guided by experienced practitioners, participants will experiment with practical tools designed to increase productivity and enhance work processes. Neutrals, advocates, and support staff will leave with actionable strategies for using AI responsibly. Be sure to bring a web-enabled device to maximize the experience.

Presenter:

Jeanne Charles, NAA, *Pembroke Pines, FL*

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. **Concurrent Session**

Current Issues in Public Safety Units

Labor relations in police units, as in many public sector settings, is like a three-legged stool: In addition to bedrock labor and management participants, the independent interests of the public and their representatives have an impact. Recent events have threatened to upend established norms in police and similar protective services units across the country. Arbitration is one such norm, challenged by calls for increased outside oversight of policing standards and discipline. Two advocates and an arbitrator who have followed these developments in Chicago and elsewhere will invite consideration of how these pressures have and may continue to affect labor relations and arbitration in police and other public safety units.



Friday, May 22, 2026 (cont'd)

(Current Issues in Public Safety Units Session Continued)

Moderator:

Amedeo Greco, NAA, *Madison, WI*

Panelists:

Mark W. Bennett, Esq., Laner Muchin, *Chicago, IL*

Stephen A. Yokich, Esq., Dowd, Bloch, Bennett, Cervone,
Auerbach & Yokich, *Chicago, IL*

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. **Fireside Chat**

Interviewer:

Judith Helburn, *Austin, TX*

Interviewee:

I.B. “Beber” Helburn, NAA, *Austin, TX*

4:30 p.m. **Committee Meetings TBD**



Saturday, May 23, 2026

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Concurrent Session

Recognizing and Responding to Gender Bias in Arbitration - A Montage and Discussion of Women's Empowerment

Starting with a brief overview of the post-World War II women's independence movement and its influence on individual arbitrators, their families, their practices, and society more broadly, this presentation examines how shifting expectations, newly claimed freedoms, and emerging roles for women reshaped professional and personal dynamics in the dispute-resolution field.

Using a curated montage of pre- and post-movement images and music, we will revisit the challenges women faced during this transformative period and highlight the cultural narratives that emerged during and after the movement. These visual and musical reflections will help us recall the obstacles, the progress, and the ongoing struggles for equity.

Following the montage, we will engage the audience in a discussion about the realities of the time: how gender bias influenced arbitrators' livelihoods and relationships, and how those historical conditions shaped our own practices and interactions with female arbitrators and professional women as a whole. Please join us and share brief comments regarding your experiences.

Moderator:

Betty Rankin Widgeon, NAA, *Ann Arbor, MI*



Saturday, May 23, 2026 (cont'd)

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. **Concurrent Session**

Where Do We Go from Here? Building a Labor Arbitration Practice in a Changing World

Interested in becoming a labor arbitrator? Join this interactive session as a panel of seasoned and newer arbitrators share practical insights on how to start and grow a labor arbitration practice in today's evolving workplace. Gain strategies, hear real-world experiences, and learn approaches to navigate the challenges of building a successful arbitration career.

Moderator:

John C. Alfano, NAA, *Avenue, MD*

Panelists:

Danielle Hargrove, NAA, *Dallas, TX*

Michael Loconto, *Boston, MA*

Charlene MacMillan, NAA, *Bellevue, WA*

Jerry Sellman, NAA, *Columbus, OH*

Rebekah Smith, Seven Tree Solutions, LLC, *Camden, ME*

John L. Woods, NAA, *Columbia, MD*

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. **Concurrent Session**

Update from the North

Get the latest insights on labour arbitration in Canada. Mark Asbell, Region 7 Chair, along with a panel of Canadian arbitrators, will review recent developments and trends across the country. The session will also provide details about the upcoming Region 7/Canadian Labour Arbitration Conference in Canmore, Alberta (September 22–25, 2026).

Presenter:

Mark Asbell, NAA, *Sherwood Park, AB*



Saturday, May 23, 2026 (cont'd)

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **Break**

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Concurrent Session**

Media Skills: Confident Communication for Arbitrators

Effective communication is key for arbitrators facing high-stakes interactions with the media and the public. This hands-on workshop, led by the NAA Media and Communication Strategy Committee and Common Ground Public Relations, equips participants with practical techniques for crafting clear, confident messaging, managing challenging questions, and explaining the arbitration process concisely. Through individual and small-group exercises, attendees will draft statements, practice live responses, and receive targeted guidance to advocate for the profession and strengthen public understanding.

Panelists:

Denise Bentele, APR, President, CEO, and Founder of
Common Ground Public Relations, *Chesterfield, MO*

Andrea Dooley, NAA, *Oakland, CA*

Amy Hanson, Account Supervisor, Common Ground Public
Relations, *St. Louis, MO*

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Concurrent Session**

International Labor Dispute Resolution Procedures: A Comparative Analysis and Best Practices

Explore how labor disputes are resolved around the world. This panel examines dispute resolution methods in Brazil, Ireland, and the UK, highlighting best practices for fair and efficient outcomes. Speakers will draw on their extensive



Saturday, May 23, 2026 (cont'd)

(International Labor Dispute Resolution Session Continued)

bench experience to share insights and recommendations for effective procedures, with commentary from seasoned NAA members.

Moderator:

Jacquelin F. Drucker, NAA, *New York, NY*

Speakers:

Judge Lelio Bentes Correa, President of the Superior Labour Court of Brazil, *Brazil*

Kevin Duffy, Barrister and former Chairman of the Irish Labour Court, *Ireland*

Professor Alan C. Neal, UK Employment Judge (retired) 1995-2025, *England*

Commentator:

Richard Fincher, NAA, *Paradise Valley, AZ*

Closing and Thank You:

Jules Bloch, NAA, *Toronto, ON*

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Concurrent Session**

Public School Reform Through a Labor Relations Lens: A report on the work of REF grant recipient Professor Saul Rubinstein, Rutgers University

Public school reform often creates friction between teachers' unions, administrators, school boards, parents, and policymakers. This session highlights a different approach, focusing on collaboration and relationship-building to improve teaching quality and student outcomes.



Saturday, May 23, 2026 (cont'd)

(Public School Reform Session Continued)

Drawing on the work of REF grant recipient Professor Saul Rubinstein and the Rutgers New Jersey Public School Collaborative, panelists will examine outcomes including student achievement, teacher retention, and labor relations, and explore how collective bargaining can support meaningful reform.

Panelists:

Robert Bruno, Professor of Labor and Employment Relations, Director of the Labor Education Program,
Chicago, IL

Saul A. Rubinstein, Professor, School of Management & Labor Relations, Director Collaborative School Leadership Initiative, Rutgers University,
New Brunswick, NJ

Alan Symonette, NAA, *Media, PA*

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.....**Lunch on Your Own**

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.....**Member Recognitions/Business Meeting**
(Members Only)

Member recognitions followed by NAA Annual Business Meeting. New Members, new 25- & 40-Year Member recognitions, and Honorary Life Member Induction.

3:00 p.m.....**BOG Meeting**



2026 Chicago Committee

Lisa Salkovitz Kohn, Co-Chair

Dan Zeiser, Co-Chair

Randi Hammer Abramsky, Vice-Chair

John C. Alfano

Meeta A. Bass

Doug Bonney

Andrea Laiacona Dooley

Sandra Mendel Furman

Rafael Gely

Richard K. Hanft

William E. Hartsfield

Peter R. Meyers

Margo R. Newman

Betty Rankin Widgeon

Save The Date

