

Arbitrators & Advocates Symposium

September 10th & 11th 2026

Symposium Synopsis

Participants benefited from high quality, balanced instruction on the latest and most significant issues in labor relations, ensuring they stay informed of current trends and challenges.

The event provided many opportunities for attendees to network with advocates and neutrals, encouraging collaboration and the exchange of diverse perspectives.

In addition, the Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on Continuing Legal Education approved the program for 9.75 CLE hours, including 2.5 hours of instruction in attorney professional conduct. The program offers labor law professionals an excellent opportunity to strengthen their skills while earning continuing education credit.

Shawnett Miller's report as an OCSEA, ODJFS Chapter 2599 – member and attendee.

September 10, 2026

NAA Presidential Address

Walt De Treux Esq., speaker; is the president of the National Academy of Arbitrators. Walt discussed the future of the National Academy and its efforts to partner with workplace dispute resolution neutral across the globe.

The National Academy of Arbitrators founded in 1947 as a non-profit honorary and professional organization of arbitrators in the United States and Canada.

Only 350 Arbitrators operate within the U.S. and Canada

- Arbitrators' mentorship program's admission requirements
 - o 3 to 5 years Arbitration experience for admission into the academy.

Arbitration in the Age of AI: *Explore various platforms to find the one that works best for you.*

- Possibility one chat for research “CoPilot”
- ID Shift – AI Platform
- Chat GPT
 - System Instructions
 - Prioritize your chat.
 - o You can always personalize any chat within any platform.

Contract Interpretation

Victor Dandridge, Arbitrator; Kathryn VanDagens, Esq., Arbitrator, and Lisa Timmons, Esq., Arbitrator: Presented hypothetical arbitration contract interpretation scenarios to a panel of three arbitrators who will each present their thoughts on the arbitral precedents and principles on which they would rely on analyzing the case, the application of those principles to the case, and applicable laws, and how they would rule on the case.

I welcomed the opportunity to participate and enjoyed discussing past arbitration rulings and case scenarios with panelists, attorneys, law students, arbitrators, union representatives, and affiliates.

A wealth of information was presented on how Arbitrators review fact-finding, the employer's labor employment contractual agreement and/or if applicable, an agency/organization's union contract to decide an "employee(s) vs employer" labor employment arbitrated cases, collective bargaining negotiations or to resolve contract disputes outside of a court room.

Mediation Ethics in Today's Environment

Mike Franczak, Esq., Arbitrator/Mediator, Barbara Baker, Esq., Mediator, Fact Finder, Trainers, discussed, "Mediation Ethics" and the applied rules, thereof.

Attorneys who conduct mediation whether as a mediator or arbitrator are subject to the same rules of the Ohio Code of Professional Responsibility.

Key ethical standards include impartiality, confidentiality, truthfulness, and fairness of the process. An essential element is disclosure requirements to avoid a conflict of interest and to clarify that the role of a mediator does not include providing legal advice or offering attorney-client privilege.

Legal Update

Don Collins, Esq, Arbitrator/Mediator discussed, "The last 12 months has been a time of profound change on the labor and employee relations front. Reviewed and discussed the latest rules, court cases and NLRB decisions that define the current labor relations practice.

Evening Networking Reception

I took on the opportunity to dine and network with peers from diverse backgrounds and industries. I absolutely enjoyed this occasion of the event and received contact information to assist with my future career goals as it relates to Arbitration.

This networking event assisted with gaining individual knowledge of what it takes to become an "Arbitrator" which includes – Networking with other's and overall learning the "craft" of arbitration while remaining neutral, per se. impressive to say the least.

Friday, September 11, 2026

Just Cause Issues

Amy Sergeant, Esq, Arbitrator, Pete Hanlon, Arbitrator, Susie Fernandez, Esq, Arbitrator/Attorney discussed “Just Cause – “How Arbitrators Rule.”

- ❖ Fact Pattern Issues
- ❖ ORC 4117 – Public Employees Collective Bargaining

After analyzing various Factual Scenarios, of experienced Arbitrators explored and discussed the arbitral and legal nuances and challenges of the application of the time-honored Just Cause Standard within the context of labor and employment law.

During this interactive session, the arbitrators provided their decision; how they reached their conclusions; and, why.

Questions posed and moderated by: David Stanton, Dennis Minni, and Mike Duco which provided further insight and had my “brain” turning on how in-depth reviewed cases. An arbitrator may decide (for) a case and another arbitrator may oppose based on their interpretation of that same case. A great debatable discussion.

Additional topics were of discussion during this 2-day event however, this report will not suffice the amount of knowledge ascertained during this annual event.

In Solidarity,

Shawnett Miller (Wade), M.B.A. Focus Discipline Leadership
Union Steward