

Article 4A.

Voluntary Arbitration of Labor Disputes.

§ 95-36.1. Declaration of policy.

It is hereby declared as the public policy of this State that the best interests of the people of the State are served by the prompt settlement of labor disputes; that strikes and lockouts and other forms of industrial strife, regardless of where the merits of the controversy lie, are forces productive ultimately of economic waste; that the interests and rights of the consumers and the people of the State, while not direct parties to such disputes, should always be considered, respected and protected; and, where efforts at amicable settlement have been unsuccessful, that the voluntary arbitration of such disputes will tend to promote permanent industrial peace and the health, welfare, comfort and safety of the people of the State. To carry out such policies, the necessity for the enactment of the provisions of this Article is hereby declared as a matter of legislative determination. (1945, c. 1045, s. 1; 1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)

§ 95-36.2. Scope of Article.

The provisions of this Article shall apply only to voluntary agreements to arbitrate labor disputes including, but not restricted to, all controversies between employers, employees and their respective bargaining representatives, or any of them, relating to wages, hours, and other conditions of employment. (1945, c. 1045, s. 2; 1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)

§ 95-36.3. Administration of Article.

(a) The administration of this Article shall be under the general supervision of the Commissioner of Labor of North Carolina.

(b) There is hereby established in the Department of Labor an arbitration service. The Commissioner of Labor may appoint such employees as may be required for the consummation of the work under this Article, prescribe their duties and fix their compensation, subject to existing laws applicable to the appointment and compensation of employees of the State of North Carolina. Any member of or employee in the arbitration service may be removed from office by the Commissioner of Labor, acting in his discretion.

(c) The Commissioner of Labor, with the written approval of the Attorney General as to legality, shall have power to adopt, alter, amend or repeal appropriate rules of procedure for selection of the arbitrator or panel and for conduct of the arbitration proceedings in accordance with this Article: Provided, however, that such rules shall be inapplicable to the extent that they are inconsistent with the arbitration agreement of the parties. (1945, c. 1045, s. 3; 1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)

§ 95-36.4. Voluntary arbitrators.

(a) It shall be the duty of the Commissioner of Labor to maintain a list of qualified and public-spirited citizens who will serve as arbitrators. All appointments of a single arbitrator or member of an arbitration panel by the Commissioner of Labor shall be made from the list of qualified arbitrators maintained by him.

(b) No person named by the Commissioner of Labor to act as an arbitrator in a dispute shall be qualified to serve as such arbitrator if such person has any financial or other interest in the company or labor organization involved in the dispute. (1945, c. 1045, s. 4; 1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)

§ 95-36.5. Fees and expenses.

(a) All the costs of any arbitration proceeding under this Article, including the fees and expenses of the arbitrator or arbitration panel, shall be paid by the parties to the proceeding in accordance with any agreement between them. In the absence of such an agreement, the award in the proceeding shall normally require the payment of such fees, expenses and other proper costs by one or more of the parties: Provided, that if the Commissioner of Labor deems that the public interest so requires, he may provide for the payment to any arbitrator appointed by him of per diem compensation at the rate established by the Commissioner, and actual travel and other necessary expenses incurred while performing duties arising under this Article.

(b) In cases where an arbitrator has been appointed by the Commissioner, the Department of Labor may furnish necessary stenographic, clerical and technical service and assistance to the arbitrator or arbitration panel.

(c) Expenditures of public funds authorized under this section shall be paid from funds appropriated for the administration of this Article. (1945, c. 1045, s. 5; 1947, c. 379, ss. 1-3; 1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)

§ 95-36.6. Appointment of arbitrators.

The parties may by agreement determine the method of appointment of the arbitrator or arbitration panel. If the parties have agreed upon arbitration under this Article and have not otherwise agreed upon the number of arbitrators or the method for their appointment, the controversy shall be heard and decided by a single arbitrator designated in such manner as the Commissioner of Labor shall determine. Any person or agency selected by agreement or otherwise to appoint an arbitrator or arbitrators shall send by registered mail to each of the parties to the proposed proceeding notice of the demand for arbitration. The arbitrator or arbitration panel, as the case may be, shall have such powers and duties as are conferred by the voluntary agreement of the parties, and, if there is no agreement to the contrary, shall have power to decide the arbitrability as well as the merits of the dispute. (1945, c. 1045, s. 5; 1947, c. 379, ss. 1-3; 1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)

§ 95-36.7. Arbitration procedure.

Upon the selection or appointment of an arbitrator or arbitration panel in any labor dispute, a statement of the issues or questions in dispute shall be submitted to said arbitrator or panel in writing, signed by one or more of the parties or their authorized agents. The arbitrator or panel shall appoint a time and place for the hearing, and notify the parties thereof, and may postpone or adjourn the hearing from time to time as may be necessary, subject to any time limits which are agreed upon by the parties. If any party neglects to appear before the arbitrator or panel after reasonable notice, the arbitrator or panel may nevertheless proceed to hear and determine the controversy. Unless the parties have otherwise agreed, the findings and decision of a majority of an arbitration panel shall constitute the award of the panel and, if a majority vote of the panel cannot be obtained, then the findings and decision of the impartial chairman of the panel shall constitute such award. To be enforceable, the award shall be handed down within 60 days after the written statement of the issues or questions in dispute has been received by the arbitrator or panel, or within such further time as may be agreed to by the parties. (1945, c. 1045, s. 5; 1947, c. 379, ss. 1-3; 1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)

§ 95-36.8. Enforcement of arbitration agreement and award.

(a) Written agreements to arbitrate labor disputes, including but not restricted to controversies relating to wages, hours and other conditions of employment, shall be valid, enforceable and irrevocable, except upon such grounds as exist in law or equity for the rescission or revocation of any contract, in either of the following cases:

- (1) Where there is a provision in a collective bargaining agreement or any other contract, hereafter made or extended, for the settlement by arbitration of a controversy or controversies thereafter arising between the parties;
- (2) Where there is an agreement to submit to arbitration a controversy or controversies already existing between the parties.

(b) Any arbitration award, made pursuant to an agreement of the parties described in subsection (a) of this section and in accordance with this Article, shall be final and binding upon the parties to the arbitration proceedings. (1945, c. 1045, s. 5; 1947, c. 379, ss. 1-3; 1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)

§ 95-36.9. Stay of proceedings.

(a) If any action or proceeding be brought in any court upon any issue referable to arbitration under an agreement described in subsection (a) of G.S. 95-36.8, the court where the action or proceeding is pending or a judge of the superior court having jurisdiction in any county where the dispute arose shall stay the action or proceeding, except for any temporary relief which may be appropriate pending the arbitration award, until such arbitration has been had in accordance with the terms of the agreement. The application for stay may be made by motion in writing of a party to the agreement, but such motion must be made before answer or demurrer to the pleading by which the action or proceeding was begun.

(b) Any party against whom arbitration proceedings have been initiated may, within 10 days after receiving written notice of the issue or questions to be passed upon at the arbitration hearing, apply to any judge of the superior court having jurisdiction in any county where the dispute arose for a stay of the arbitration upon the ground that he has not agreed to the arbitration of the controversy involved. Any such application shall be made in writing and heard in a summary way in the manner and upon the notice provided by law or rules of court for the making and hearing of motions generally, except that it shall be entitled to priority in the interest of prompt disposition. If no such application is made within said 10-day period, a party against whom arbitration proceedings have been initiated cannot raise the issue of arbitrability except before the arbitrator and in proceedings subsequent to the award.

(c) Any party against whom an arbitration award has been issued may, within 10 days after receiving written notice of such award, apply to any judge of the superior court having jurisdiction in any county where the dispute arose for a stay of the award upon the ground that it exceeds the authority conferred by the arbitration agreement. Any such application shall be made in writing and heard in a summary way in the manner and upon the notice provided by law or rules of court for the making and hearing of motions generally, except that it shall be entitled to priority in the interest of prompt disposition. If no such application is made within said 10-day period, a party against whom arbitration proceedings have been initiated cannot raise the issue of arbitrability except before the arbitrator or arbitrators, or in proceedings to enforce the award. Any failure to abide by an award shall not constitute a breach of the contract to arbitrate, pending disposition of a timely application for stay of the award pursuant to this paragraph. (1951, c. 1103, s. 1.)