

Challenge based on arbitrator's bias fails

A federal court has concluded it doesn't have the right to disqualify an arbitrator from hearing a case before a decision has been made. It's another indication that courts aren't eager to micromanage arbitrations.

Recent case: When William and 32 other General Mills employees who had been laid off were offered separation agreements, they signed. The agreements included an arbitration clause. They sued in federal court, arguing that the agreements weren't knowing and voluntary. An appeals court said arbitration was the proper forum.

The first arbitrator ruled in favor of General Mills, and the former employees went to federal court, requesting all arbitrations halted because of alleged arbitrator bias in the first ruling. They claimed that the arbitrator was connected socially to General Mills.

The court refused to halt the other arbitrations, concluding it had no authority to do so pre-emptively. (*Shields, et al.*, DC MN, 2018)