

Central Division News & Views

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State PRB-1 Legislative Activities

Now that Wisconsin has passed its version of PRB-1, it's time for the Amateur Radio communities in our other two states to press for this type of legislation. Indiana hams tried to get a similar act passed a couple of years ago. I'm not sure if Illinois hams have ever formally asked their representatives to introduce, let alone pass, PRB-1 legislation. Perhaps with the major changes in leadership in Springfield this year, Illinois hams should organize and press for an Illinois PRB-1 Act.

I understand another effort is now underway in Indiana. Indiana Section Manager, Jim Sellers, reports that Indiana State Senator Rose Ann Antich has introduced a bill regarding Amateur Radio Antennas (SB109). This bill parallels PRB-1 with the exception of specifying an antenna height of 75 feet, instead of "reasonable". Contact Jim at k9zbm@arrl.org for the details of this proposed bill.

The height of "antenna support structures" may be taking on another dimension on the West Coast. The Washington State Legislature is considering an amendment to its PRB-1 law that, if passed, would require a minimum height of 75 ft. Apparently, concerns about RF exposure may override long-standing esthetic arguments used to limit antenna heights.

WRC-2003 Final Preparations

We are entering the final stage of preparations for the *ITU World Radio Conference* (WRC-2003) to be held this coming spring. This is an international conference of delegations from all the world's governments whose purpose is to amend - as necessary - existing international treaties on RF spectrum use. After these agreements are thrashed out by this conference, each of the participating governments have to ratify them. And once this ratification process has been completed, only then will proposals to change specific government RF spectrum regulations be considered. Therefore, any treaty changes affecting the Amateur Radio Service will take a few years to be worked into our FCC Regulations.

However, these amateur radio proposals first have to be agreed to by WRC-2003. It's safe to say one of the primary requests by radio amateurs is to eliminate broadcast interference on the 40 meter Amateur Radio band that was created by international treaty after World War II. As of my writing this newsletter, the U.S. government's proposed official position on this issue at WRC-2003 is "*no change needed*". If we are to reach our goal of eliminating HF broadcast interference that comes from those parts of the world where these broadcasts are legal, the ARRL Board of Directors believes our U.S. government's official position must actively support our 40 meter band request. ARRL staff, officers, and our political allies are working to get this official position changed to one supporting "harmonization of the 40 meter Amateur Radio spectrum allocation" or words to that effect.

This report is not a call to arms. Burying our Congressmen and Senators with paper and electronic correspondence would probably do more harm than good. World Radio Conference treaties are worked out over days and days of patient lobbying and negotiating. The U.S. WRC delegation is under a lot of pressure from various private and government agencies to push for treaty changes. Amateur radio requests are usually below the "noise level" and are easily accommodated. But this time around, we are up against the world-wide international broadcasters (both private and government) and they are reluctant

to spend money changing frequencies. Hopefully, the ARRL's years of work combined with our newly recognized value to Homeland Defense will result in a world-wide 300 KHz allocation of broadcast-free 40 meter RF spectrum .

Emergency Communications Courses A Great Success

Hundreds of people have successfully completed Level-1 of the *Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Course*. Our three year federal grant is allowing us to ramp up this effort and it's starting to show up in how amateurs (who have had this basic training) are regarded by the various disaster and relief agencies. Reports from the field indicate these agencies are very happy with these trained volunteers. Efforts are being made to secure additional grants (private and public) to underwrite Level-2 and 3 training.

Amateur radio's increasing stature within the emergency services organizations and *Homeland Defense Department* will help us secure our future as a recognized radio service. In view of our ever growing problems with Part 15 device interference and antenna restrictions, we need all the help we can get.

ARRL Membership Recruitment & Retention

It's no secret that ARRL membership has been declining. At its January meeting, the ARRL board established an Ad Hoc Committee charged with developing and supervising a plan to greatly increase member recruitment and retention. It's agreed that more effective use of these resources, currently diffused across two departments at headquarters, will greatly increase ARRL membership. If you have any specific positive ideas for this project, please email them to me.

73 - George R. (Dick) Isely, W9GIG
Central Division Director