

Central Division News & Views

Issue #14 - December, 2005

ARRL - FCC Relationship Changing?

I am completing my fifth year on the ARRL Board of Directors with another year to go on my second term. When I first took office as your Central Division Director on January 1, 2001, little did I realize how many FCC regulatory issues the ARRL board would have to face. The big ones have been:

1. FCC elimination of Morse code 20 and 13 wpm requirements.
2. ARRL Novice HF spectrum "re-farming" petition.
3. FCC approval of RFID tag systems.
4. FCC approval of BPL Internet communications.
5. ARRL petition for new entry-level license (Restructuring II).
6. FCC proposed elimination of Morse code licensing requirement.
7. ARRL petition to regulate Amateur Radio HF spectrum by bandwidth.

Issues #1, #3, and #4 are done deals. However, ARRL is still arguing how BPL is to be regulated and may possibly challenge the FCC in the federal appellate court system. Issues #2, #5, and #6 are still in FCC process. The *Novice Re-farming* proposal has been waiting on formal FCC ruling for about three years! After three plus years of discussion and drafting, ARRL's *bandwidth petition* (Issue #7) was recently filed with the FCC. It's much too early to say what will happen to this latest petition.

Many years ago, the ARRL enjoyed a much more cooperative relationship with the FCC. When Congress ordered the FCC to reduce its costs and even produce revenue by spectrum auctions (a very stupid idea), this relationship started breaking down. Today, regulatory proposals initiated from outside the FCC usually take several years before they are enacted into law. And then, the resulting regulations sometimes bear little resemblance to the petitioner's original proposal. ARRL's *License Restructuring II* proposal is a good example. The FCC totally ignored our entry-level license proposal and our proposal to eliminate contradictions and confusions in the Amateur Radio license class structure. Gone are the days when discussions with FCC bureau staff resulted in a petition that received a prompt and fair hearing with a good chance of its being enacted into law.

What's the answer to this situation? In the short run, ARRL cannot do very much to restore the previous relationship because of reduced staff and budgetary pressures within the FCC, and White House directives. We are right now forced to more congressional political activity which does not sit well with the FCC as a whole. I believe we still have friends in the Commission... but not as many as in the past. In the current federal regulatory atmosphere, we cannot even dream of matching the flood of corporate money. However, we can and must develop a large *grass roots* political network that will offset this financial influence at the federal legislative level and with the FCC by getting voters to talk to their representatives on behalf of amateur radio.

The key to this grass roots effort is to recruit more active hams and ARRL members. As many of you already know, plans and policies are being developed to make this happen. When you are asked to really participate, please get involved. We can win this struggle. But it will take more involved ARRL members than we now have to effectively reach out to our elected representatives and to the general public.

Central Division Elections in 2006

This spring, all three ARRL Sections in the Central Division will be holding Section Manager elections. Next fall the offices of Central Division Director and Vice Director will be up for election. If any of you want to run for any of these offices, now is the time to seriously think through the job requirements, obtain your family's permission and support, and then round up supporters for your election campaign. One does not need to create elaborate plans and spend lots of money to get elected. The best way to succeed is face-to-face (FTF) contact between the candidate and the voters. Or at least FTF contact between knowledgeable supporters and the voters. Waiting until right before the ballots are mailed out is too late to organize a campaign. Particularly if the candidate is not widely known throughout the division or respective section.

The official announcement for our Section Manager elections is in the January 2006 issue of *QST*. I believe a similar announcement for our Director and Vice Director election will be in the July *QST*. In order to avoid even the appearance of electioneering at member expense, this will be my only mention of these elections in this newsletter until after they have been concluded.

Hamfest Visits & Meetings

This time of the year a lot of the late winter and early spring Central Division hamfests are in the planning stage. As of the publication of this newsletter, here is my ARRL travel schedule for the first three months of 2006. It is subject to change if required ARRL meeting dates are changed or there are last minute transportation problems.

Jan 7	WARAC Hamfest	Waukesha, WI
Jan 20-23	ARRL Board Meeting	Windsor Locks, CT
Mar - Apr	ARRL Committee Meeting	Weekend TBA

I hope to see many of you at these hamfests. In addition to shopping for new and used equipment, they are a great way to renew and develop friendships and to meet some of the voices you have heard on your radios.

In Closing...

My wife, Judy, and I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy and Healthy New year! I added "healthy" to our wishes because we are in good health, but we are old enough to no longer take it for granted.

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