

Central Division News & Views

Issue #19 - December, 2008

2008 An Interesting Year. What About 2009?

Many years ago, somebody told me there is an ancient Confucian curse that goes as follows: “May you live in interesting times.” There are people who, depending on their viewpoints and concerns, interpret “interesting times” as either bad or good times. For the Amateur Radio Service, 2008 has been a mixed bag of truly interesting times. The obvious good time was the ARRL’s winning its federal appellate court case against the Federal Communications Commission last April. The ARRL still has to work with the FCC to establish the exact parameters of the review of FCC actions pertaining to its approval of BPL. This process has yet to begin and probably will not be started until the appointment of replacement commissioners after Barack Obama is inaugurated as our 44th President next January.

Lame Duck FCC Leadership: Until the change of FCC leadership has been completed, we expect no substantive actions from the FCC on pending issues affecting the Amateur Radio Service. (The same is also true for the other communications services.) In the case of BPL, the resulting regulatory uncertainty is good for us. Anybody who has followed this struggle, knows the BPL technical parameters used as the basis for FCC approval are bogus. We have also learned the BPL business model does not work. Therefore, BPL uncertainty on all fronts, works to our advantage.

However, this lack of action, particularly FCC Chairman Kevin Martin’s lack of action, stalls the appointment of Riley Hollingsworth’s replacement in the Enforcement Bureau. This means there is currently no processing of new interference complaints within any communications service. And this delay could result in more bad times for everyone suffering from RF interference.

ARRL Financial Prospects: Our deepening world-wide economic crisis is creating bad times for everybody, including the ARRL. In my eight years of ARRL board service, I have seen our operating costs reduced through the more efficient use of personnel, and the improvement and replacement of outdated equipment and facilities. Other than the gradual elimination of the senior discount, we have not had a general dues increase since 2001 and no increase is anticipated in 2009.

Besides our operating efficiencies, the ARRL Development Department, under the able leadership of Mary Hobart, K1MMH, has created new revenues through private and government grants and the creation of a cadre of ARRL members who make donations, every year, to the ARRL. Without ARRL development activities, we would not have been able to keep our basic dues rate constant for the last seven years. In hard economic times charitable donations are usually one of the first income sources to take a hit. I do not know how this will play out the next couple of years. I’m sure the ARRL will do all in its power to reduce any negative financial impacts, but I am really concerned.

Seasons Greetings

In spite of all the gloomy words above, I do believe our economy will start to recover before the end of next year. However, at this time, I will not even guess how this recovery will take. **I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.**

Hamfests & Meetings

As of the publication of this newsletter issue, here is my ARRL travel schedule for January 2009. It is subject to change if required ARRL meeting dates are changed or there are last minute transportation problems.

Jan 3, 2009	WARAC Hamfest	Waukesha, WI	
Jan 15-28, 2009	ARRL Board Meeting	Hartford, CT	
Jan 25, 2009	WCRA Hamfest	St. Charles, IL	Kane Co. Fairgrounds

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.

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