

Central Division News & Views

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Thoughts About Amateur Radio Politics

Long before I was elected ARRL Central Division Director, I have been asked the following two questions, in various contexts and venues. Why do we have Amateur Radio politics? Is this necessary? To start with, all human group activities involve various forms of give and take ranging from informal verbal understandings to organized corporations and all the levels of government. Human culture, technology and civilization itself cannot exist without politics. In this regard, Amateur Radio is no different.

However, I think our American political culture is becoming too polarized. Individual political beliefs are being given too much weight when individual personal qualities are assessed, or an organization's relationships with government are being evaluated or are changing.

As your elected ARRL director, my first priorities are to enhance and secure the long-term survival of the U.S. Amateur Radio Service and the ARRL. I list the Amateur Radio Service first because without it, there would probably be no ARRL.

The two greatest threats to Amateur Radio are Broadband over Power Lines (BPL) interference and antenna Conditions, Covenants and Restrictions (CC&Rs) on residential real estate deeds. As you all know, we are finally making good progress on the BPL problem. However, the CC&R issue still exists virtually unchanged. Earlier attempts to get the FCC and then the U.S. Congress to extend the application of PRB-1 to antenna CC&Rs have never gained much political traction.

Please note that protection of property values has been proven time and again to not be a viable reason to suppress amateur radio antennas. The original driver for antenna CC&Rs was the CATV industry, which still wants to suppress exterior TV antennas, but made the suggested restrictions too broad. The CATV folks have been paying real estate developers to insert these restrictions into the property deeds and leases for about 60 years. The FCC later overrode these restrictions as applied to satellite TV antennas.

Now, our paid Congressional lobbying firm, *Chwat & Company*, has developed a new approach for working on the CC&R problem. Working with the Homeland Defense issue, we have succeeded in getting House Bill, HR-2160, *The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Enhancement Act of 2009*, assigned to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Instead of directly asking for changes to PRB-1, this bill, if approved by Congress will require the Department of Homeland Defense to study the [antenna] impediments faced by amateur radio licensees and how these impediments make it difficult for us to provide effective emergency radio communications.

I have already received a few verbal and written comments by some Amateur Radio licensees that demean, even attack, the liberal political orientation of some of the congressional supporters of HR-2160. Some of these people either ignore or don't know that one of the bill's co-sponsors is strongly conservative.

Everybody is entitled to his own political convictions and I will defend their right to speak them as long

as they do not advocate the overthrow of our U.S. government. However, extreme partisan attitudes do not help our effort to obtain reasonable relief from these CC&Rs for Amateur Radio licensees. I don't care about the political biases and beliefs of our elected federal, state, and local representatives as long as they support the legitimate needs of our Amateur Radio Service. I ask every Amateur Radio licensee to put aside personal political views and to support our joint struggle to level the playing field when it comes to dealing with antenna CC&Rs.

Hamfests & Meetings

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

May 14-17	Dayton Hamvention	Dayton, OH
Jun 7	SRRC Hamfest	Princeton, IL
Jun 21	6 Mtr Club Hamfest	Wheaton, IL
Jul 11	Indianapolis Hamfest	Indianapolis, IN
Jul 12	FRRL Hamfest	Aurora, IL
Jul 15-19	ARRL Board Meeting	Hartford, CT

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