

ARRL Legislative Update – Issue # 1
January 31, 2011

What, another Newsletter?

I know you are asking yourself – “What, another newsletter? Why?”

There could be many answers to this question, but the best is probably “Because the ARRL needs to keep its members better informed on what we are doing in the area of advocacy and legislative action.”

This will not be a monthly newsletter. Rather it will be a timely newsletter with the goal to convey important information in a timely manner to the ARRL family. The legislative process is a fickle thing – sometimes it moves as slow as molasses in a New England winter; at other points time is of the essence. Developing a newsletter designed to be emailed to interested ARRL members is a good way to provide important news and calls for action expediently.

No general member will be automatically signed-up to receive this newsletter: it is an “opt-in” addition available to ARRL members. To receive it, go to your Member Profile on the ARRL Web at www.arrl.org/Users/edit and select the tab for “Edit Email Subscriptions”. To receive the Legislative Update when it is mailed, simply check the appropriate box on that page then click “SAVE” at the bottom. It is that simple. To unsubscribe, follow the same process, but uncheck the box for this newsletter.

The ARRL Legislative Update will focus on ARRL Legislative and Advocacy efforts *at the national level*. Your local ARRL Section Managers and their State Government Liaisons manage activities at the state level. At times there may be significant efforts at the state level that should be shared in the ARRL Legislative Update, but for regular information on what’s happening at the state or local efforts, contact your ARRL Section Manager.

A Message from ARRL President Kay Craigie, N3KN

Dear Fellow League Members,

The ARRL’s advocacy for Amateur Radio on Capitol Hill is almost as old as the organization itself. In 1917, just three years after the ARRL was founded, and again in 1918, we joined with other radio interests in successfully opposing legislation that would have granted control over all radio communications to the Navy. Members were asked to write to their elected representatives in support of this effort.

After World War I ended in November 1918, Amateurs were allowed to receive radio transmissions, but the wartime ban on Amateur Radio transmitting continued in effect. The League’s initial efforts to get hams back on the air were deflected with bureaucratic sandbagging. The Navy was again seeking control over international radio communications. Only after the ARRL arranged introduction of resolutions in Congress was the ban lifted, allowing Amateurs to resume transmitting -- a year after the war was over.

If the ARRL, with the support of our members, had not spoken out for Amateur Radio on Capitol Hill in those early days of radio and gotten us back on the air, would there even be ham radio in the United States today?

The League's advocacy in Congress was important then, and it is important now. The ARRL Washington team does our part, but Senators and Representatives listen best to you, their constituents. You can tell them specific examples of how Amateur Radio makes a difference in your state and your Congressional district. You can get their attention for Amateur Radio in ways no one else can do.

Please join me in continuing the ARRL's work as the authoritative voice speaking for Amateur Radio on Capitol Hill, as this new session of Congress gets under way.

73,

Kay Craigie, N3KN
President, ARRL

A Message from ARRL Executive Vice-President / CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ

Dear Member,

Thank you for reading this far in our inaugural Legislative Update. Your support of the ARRL's efforts to promote Amateur Radio on Capitol Hill is essential to our success.

That success is not measured only by bills that are passed and signed into law. At least as important is that we prevent unfavorable legislation from advancing to the President's desk. The ARRL legislative agenda for the 112th Congress includes our hopes for legislation to enhance our ability to serve our country and our neighbors as well as to guard against Congressional actions that would diminish our rights as federal licensees. Threats often come in the form of unintended consequences of well-meaning legislation, as in the case of "distracted driving" bills that are aimed against unsafe driving practices but are sometimes too vague or too broad.

You have a good team working on your behalf in Washington. Please count yourself as a part of that team – we do!

73,

David Sumner, K1ZZ
Chief Executive Officer

ARRL Legislative Agenda for the 112th Congress

At its annual meeting in January 2011, the ARRL Board of Directors unanimously adopted the following legislative objectives for the 112th Congress:

Objective #1: The ARRL seeks legislation to extend the requirement for “reasonable accommodation” of Amateur Radio station antennas and antenna support structures (requirement that now applies to state and local regulations) to all forms of land use regulation.

Objective #2: The ARRL opposes legislation that would lead to the reallocation of amateur spectrum or to sharing arrangements that reduce the utility of existing allocations.

Objective #3: The ARRL opposes legislation that diminishes the rights of federal licensees in favor of unlicensed emitters or encourages the deployment of spectrum-polluting technologies.

Objective #4: The ARRL seeks recognition of the unique resources, capabilities and expertise of the Amateur Radio Service in any legislation addressing communications issues related to emergencies, disasters, or homeland security.

Objective #5: The ARRL supports the complementary legislative objectives of other radiocommunication services, particularly the public safety and scientific services that require spectrum access and protection from interference for noncommercial purposes that benefit the public.

Objective #6: The ARRL opposes “distracted driving” legislation that does not clearly exempt two-way mobile radio transmitters or receivers used by licensees of the Federal Communications Commission in the Amateur Radio Service.

Objective #7: The ARRL supports The FCC Commissioners’ Technical Resources Enhancement Act to ensure that Commissioners have adequate access to technical expertise when making decisions.”

Over the next months, ARRL members will be kept informed about our plan of action for moving this agenda forward. You will at times be asked to send letters to key members of Congress and the Senate to help them gauge the wishes of their constituents (that is YOU) on various pieces of legislation. When we ask you to act, we encourage you to do so promptly, as time is of the essence as we try to coordinate our response with the various timetables when pieces of legislation are being considered.

To keep the legislative interests of Amateurs moving, remember the most important piece of this puzzle is YOU! With maximum member participation, we can make this happen! Get Involved!

Some Basic Questions and Answers

Q. Who determines the ARRL Legislative Agenda?

A. The ARRL Board of Directors is the policy maker for the organization. The Executive Committee, working in conjunction with the ARRL Washington team, makes recommendations for consideration by the full Board. After discussion and debate, the Board votes upon the policy goals.

Q. Who is this company Chwat & Co that I hear about and what is their role?

A. The ARRL has retained the Washington firm of Chwat & Co to assist in developing the most effective action program. Headed by John Chwat, the firm monitors the activities of Congress, identifying legislation that could possibly impact the Amateur Radio Service. When the ARRL decides to promote or influence legislation, Chwat & Co spearheads direct ARRL contact with key legislators and their staffs.

Q. Why are we asked to send letters to Chwat & Co to deliver to our members of Congress? Why should I do that instead of contacting my member directly?

A. There are several reasons. First, when letters from constituents are hand-delivered to a Congressional office, it gives our Washington team the opportunity to have some direct “face time” with the Congressperson and/or their key staff. Hand delivering a stack of letters supporting a bill makes a greater impact than having those letters trickle in through the US mail system.

Because of security concerns, when you mail a letter to your member of Congress, it is automatically directed to a warehouse in Maryland for security screening, including tests for possible dangerous substances. This can delay delivery of even routine letters by up to *six weeks*.

Q. I noticed on my Congressperson’s website a form where I can send in my comments using a web form. Should I use that instead of mailing a letter to Chwat?

A. While those web forms are convenient for constituent use, our Washington team says they really are not effective communications for a concerted lobbying effort. Again, the impact of several dozen letters being hand-delivered to the Congressional office is far more effective than a web form or telephone calls to their office.

Q. I have sent my letters to Chwat’s office as directed in the past, but never heard back from the Congressman’s office. Should I be concerned that my letter wasn’t delivered?

A. Rest assured that all letters received by our Washington lobbyist’s office are delivered to the appropriate Congressional office. Different members of Congress are not always as efficient as others in sending acknowledgements to their constituents.

HR 81 –“The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Enhancement Act” - is introduced into the 112th House of Representatives

On January 5, 2011, Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee (TX) introduced “The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Enhancement Act of 2011” into the US House of Representatives. Congresswoman Jackson-Lee introduced the same bill that was previously identified as HR 2160 into the 111th Congress. Identified this session as HR 81, the bill has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

In the 111th Congress, HR 2160 secured the support and co-sponsorship of 41 members of the House, but was not moved out of committee for consideration by the full House. Though not enacted, the support received for HR 2160 was significant, which led Congresswoman Jackson-Lee to reintroduce the bill, now assigned a new number, to the new Congress.

S 191 – “The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Enhancement Act” – is introduced into the 112th Senate

Senator Joe Lieberman (CT), again with the initial co-sponsorship of Senator Susan Collins (ME), introduced “The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Enhancement Act” into the US Senate on January 26, 2011. The bill is nearly identical to S 1755, which unanimously passed the Senate in the fall of 2009 and was sent to the House of Representatives for consideration. According to THOMAS (The Library of Congress website that provides information on legislation), as of January 31, the text of the bill has not yet been received from the GPO.

What’s Simmering On The Stove?

When it comes to legislative affairs and regulatory issues, it is often compared to trying to take aim on a moving target. What may be the “hot button” issue today may well be “yesterday’s news” in a month. Getting ARRL members accurate information in a timely manner leads to those same ARRL members taking quick action when asked to contact their Representatives or Senators about an issue

Over the next several weeks, the ARRL Washington team will be making contacts with key legislators and Congressional staffers, as we plan our strategy for promoting S 191 and HR 81. After that plan has been finalized, ARRL will be using its resources – *QST*, the ARRL Web, this Legislative Update newsletter, the Grassroots program, and one-on-one member contacts – to help get the word out. That call for action will be the cue for you – the ARRL membership – to begin YOUR lobbying of Congress on these key bills.

We came tantalizingly close to achieving success in the 111th Congress. With your help, we can be successful in the 112th Congress. Stay tuned for more information and direction plans of action! 73

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