



Legislative Update – Issue # 7 December 2014

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HR 4969 – The Amateur Radio Parity Act of 2014 & the 113th Congress

With the adjournment of the 113th Congress in December, it is time to assess where the Amateur Radio Parity Act of 2014 stands. The bill, known as HR 4969, did not receive consideration by the full House of Representatives, but that does not mean the bill has been defeated. In fact, right up to the final gavel, members of the House were stepping up to sign-on as co-sponsors. Including the original sponsor, Congressman Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, 70 Representatives signed on in support during the six months following its introduction.

The reason HR 4969 has traction in Congress is apparent. The grassroots lobbying efforts of thousands of ARRL members – from individual members to elected leadership to staff – has raised the consciousness of Congress. Your efforts – whether it was writing a letter, making a phone call, or having a face-to-face meeting with your Representatives and staff gave the issue a very loud and substantial voice. You make a difference!

Since the end of June, we delivered thousands of your letters to Congressional offices, all with the common goal of lobbying your individual Representatives to support HR 4969. ARRL officers, division directors, staff and ARRL section leadership attended dozens of meetings with Congressional members and staff to explain the rationale behind the bill and to seek their support. Without those contacts, HR 4969 would not have received the legislative support it has already received.

Realistically, very few bills succeed the first time. However, the bipartisan support garnered by this bill - 44 Republicans and 26 Democrats - is a good measure that we can be successful. As with many projects, it takes time. The adjournment of this Congress means HR 4969 “dies” in committee. While we are disappointed, there is every reason to look for a positive outcome when the new Congress assembles in January 2015.

The grassroots efforts of the ARRL members were definitely not “in vain.” Of the 70 members of Congress who signed on to HR 4969, 63 will be returning to Capitol Hill when the 114th Congress begins its deliberations. Those prior supporters give us a very broad and strong starting point from which to renew our efforts. Our DC team expects the bill to be reintroduced when the new Congress convenes and a member of the US Senate has inquired about introducing the bill into that body. That means progress!

So a huge and grateful THANK YOU to the thousands of ARRL members who stepped up to support HR 4969. You are leading this effort! The new bill will receive a different number when introduced. At that time, we will be asking the ARRL membership to renew their efforts to with their members of Congress. Until then, enjoy the holiday season. 73



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A Message from ARRL President Kay Craigie

Dear fellow ARRL members,

The federal legislative process is a long game. The good news is that the ARRL's legislative advocacy for relief from private land use restrictions is in a better place now than ever before. With members' good work as an essential component, we signed up 69 co-sponsors for H.R 4969 in half a year. That momentum is the result of outstanding advocacy at the national and Congressional district level.

If your member of Congress became a co-sponsor, please phone or e-mail now to thank him or her if you have not already done so. If your member of Congress retired or was defeated for re-election, send your thanks anyway. We do not know how and when the person's good will may turn out to benefit Amateur Radio in the future.

As I said in the video recorded last summer, even if we are not personally affected by these restrictions, we have to stand up for our fellow hams and to speak out for people who have not become hams yet. The trend towards private land use restrictions on antennas portends a chilling effect on the future of Amateur Radio in this country. We must ask Congress to send the message to the FCC to use their existing authority to level the playing field. This will ensure that hams whose properties are under municipal zoning and those whose properties have private land use restrictions have a similar opportunity to negotiate reasonable accommodation. In other words, regulatory parity.

But let's balance the good news with realism. Because the legislative process is a long game, our success in signing up co-sponsors so quickly in the waning months of the 113th Congress should not promote unrealistic ideas about how fast things may happen in the 114th Congress. Rely on this, however: We will build on the momentum already achieved. The legislation will be re-introduced and with your help at the local level, the ARRL will advocate assertively and relentlessly for its adoption.

Please be on the lookout for information on how you can support legislative advocacy in the next Congress. In the Centennial year, we reflected on the past accomplishments of Amateur Radio and the ARRL, including the courageous advocacy work that began in the very first years of our League. The specific issues may have changed, but the responsibility is the same now as it was a century ago: to stand up, speak out, and never give up. Never give up!

Thanks for being part of shouldering that responsibility, and Happy New Year 2015!

73,

Kay Craigie, N3KN
President, ARRL