

The just-concluded ARRL National Centennial Convention in Hartford, Connecticut, helped to infuse some energy into efforts to line up co-sponsors for "The Amateur Radio Parity Act of 2014" -- HR.4969.

The measure, introduced in the US House of Representatives with bipartisan support in late June, calls on the FCC to apply the "reasonable accommodation" three-part test of the PRB-1 federal pre-emption policy to private land-use restrictions regarding antennas. The bill's primary sponsor is Rep Adam Kinzinger (R-IL). It received initial co-sponsorship from Rep Joe Courtney (D-CT). An additional four co-sponsors have since signed aboard the bill. Courtney visited the ARRL Centennial Convention on July 19 to speak with League officials and those attending the event. At present PRB-1 only applies to state and municipal land-use ordinances, and the FCC has indicated that it will not act to provide the same legal protections from private land-use agreements -- often called covenants, conditions, and restrictions (or CC&Rs) -- without direction from Congress.

Convention visitors began sporting League-supplied "Get Behind HR 4969" stickers as the event shifted into high gear. Behind the stickers is a grassroots effort to encourage members to contact their congressional representatives to seek their support as co-sponsors for HR.4969. The effort at the Convention to entice visitors to sign letters to lawmakers yielded some 1400 constituent letters that will be hand delivered to members of Congress, a July 19 Convention Legislative Update Forum was told.

ARRL General Counsel Chris Imlay, W3KD, said there already is precedent for the FCC to act. He explained that the Commission's so-called Over-the-Air Receiving Device (OTARD) rules currently preempt private land-use agreements to permit the installation of television antennas and satellite dishes. He suggested that making the leap to reasonably accommodating outdoor Amateur Radio antennas is within the FCC's regulatory scope, given the established strong federal interest in effective Amateur Radio communication.

Initial HR.4969 co-sponsor US Rep Joe Courtney (D-CT) visited the ARRL Centennial Convention. [LJB Special Photography photo]

"People don't always get to choose where they live," Imlay said. CC&Rs enforced by homeowner's associations may or may not permit antennas or may only permit them with approval. He said that by 1990, some 29 million US residents were affected by private land-use agreements. "In 2011, that

number changed to 62.3 million people," Imlay said. The goal, he explained, is to compel homeowner's associations to negotiate "reasonable accommodation" with an affected radio amateur. That could mean an outdoor wire antenna or something more elaborate; Imlay said it's not the intent of the bill to specify any particular type of antenna.

HR.4969 has been referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Rep Greg Walden, W7EQI (R-OR), chairs that panel's Communications and Technology Subcommittee, which will consider the measure. The League had approached Walden, who helped to engineer the current legislation.

"All [the bill] says is, take PRB-1, and apply it to all land-use regulation," Imlay said. "This couldn't be any simpler."

Imlay said the bill faces opposition from the Community Associations Institute and an organization called Associa, which has suggested to Kinzinger that he "re-think" the bill.

"We need to get a lot of co-sponsors for this bill," Imlay said.

A principal proponent of HR.4969 is ARRL Hudson Division Director Mike Lisenco, N2YBB. "We are the ones who are responsible for our own future. The way to get things done is to be active on a grassroots level -- small scale," he told the gathering of about 50 interested radio amateurs. "This way you're dealing with your representatives as a constituent." Several forum attendees left early so they could visit the ARRL exhibit on the convention floor to obtain the necessary materials.

ARRL Regulatory Affairs Manager Dan Henderson, N1ND, pointed out that the League has opened a HR.4969 page on the ARRL website. It contains information and resources for clubs and individuals wishing to support efforts to gain co-sponsors for the measure by contacting their members of Congress. It includes a sample letter to a member of Congress and a list of "talking points." Lisenco recommended organizing small teams of knowledgeable and articulate radio amateurs to approach lawmakers one to one to plead their case.

Just prior to the Convention, ARRL President Kay Craigie, N3KN, released a video appeal to all radio amateurs to get behind a grassroots campaign to promote co-sponsorship of HR.4969.

FEMA and ARRL Sign Agreement; FEMA Administrator Calls Ham Radio "Resilient"

FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, KK4INZ (left) and ARRL President Kay Craigie, N3KN, sign a Memorandum of Agreement. [Rick Lindquist, WW1ME, photo]

"Radio is one of the most resilient communications technologies we have," Fugate said. "When the power is out and telecommunications are down, the Amateur Radio community can serve as a vital resource in support of emergency responders and survivors during a disaster. This MOA will strengthen FEMA's partnership with ARRL and build upon our work to expand emergency communications capabilities and the use of Amateur Radio in emergency management."

The new agreement will allow FEMA and ARRL to work together to provide resources, services and personnel, as available, in order to strengthen capacity in areas of emergency communications, mass care and emergency assistance, disaster preparedness, response and recovery, while also raising public awareness about the use of Amateur Radio as a public safety resource. The pact also outlines the ways in which FEMA and ARRL will cooperate to carry out their respective responsibilities, with respect to disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery operations in the event of a natural or manmade disaster.

(L-R) National Hurricane Center Amateur Radio Coordinator John McHugh, K4AG; FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, KK4INZ, and NHC Assistant Amateur Radio Coordinator Julio Ripoll, WD4R. [Rick Lindquist, WW1ME, photo]

Craigie said that from radio's earliest days of experimentation to the present, ham radio volunteers have combined a passion for technology with a devotion to assisting agencies that respond to disasters. "This combination of inventiveness and service has saved lives for a century," she said. "We look forward to working with FEMA to further develop opportunities for trained, equipped and prepared Amateur Radio operators to serve the public interest whenever and wherever disasters affect our country and its communities."

Fugate echoed his afternoon remarks as the keynote speaker at the ARRL National Centennial Convention Banquet Friday evening. He said that before he even became FEMA administrator, it became clear to him that Amateur Radio could support ad hoc communication without relying on conventional communication systems. "The more sophisticated our systems become, the more fragile they become," he told the gathering of some 900 dinner guests. He again emphasized the need for resiliency in communication systems, and asked, "How many public safety networks can come close to ham radio's bandwidth?"

"The relevancy of ham radio only grows," he asserted. "Amateur Radio is taking that hobby and turning it into saving lives."

April 14, 2014

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub met at the Western Sizzlin Restaurant for the April meeting. Before the meeting the following videos were shown: Angel Flight, Flying Lawn Mower and ARRL at 100.

President Jerry Wharton KA8NJW opened the meeting at 7:11PM. Introductions were made by 24 members and guests. The 50/50 drawing of \$19.00 was won by Dick Wilson N8KNA.

The minutes of the March meeting were read and approved and the treasurer's report was given by Jane McGuffey N8MOW.

Unfinished business: Earl KB8HRG talked to SERA and they confirmed that the 147.390 repeater is coordinated.

Earl KB8HRG reported that the new controllers have been built and installed on both repeaters. A third one will be used on the proposed link. There will be a need for a work party to build antennas for this link.

The emergency generator has been installed at the 146.970 site, so a mower building can be installed whenever the weather improves.

New business: The shelter at Fort Boreman Park has been reserved for Field Day, unless the county has lost the reservation.

The Jackson County hamfest will be April 26 and Athens April 27.

Darlene W8PAN will be net control tomorrow night.

Curt K8UC talked with a former ham that takes tickets at the downtown county parking lot. He had his license taken at the start of World War II and did not try to get it back after the war. He is in his 90's.

There being no further business, Jep K8BOT moved and Curt K8UC seconded to adjourn.

May 12, 2014

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub met at the Western Sizzlin Restaurant for the May meeting. Introductions were made by 32 members and guests. The 50/50 drawing of \$20 was won by Mary Wharton.

Before the meeting, Jim K8BOT gave a talk about the history of AM radio station WPAR. The station first went on the air in 1935 in South Parkersburg using a long wire antenna. An engineer was required to be on duty whenever the radio was on the air. The news was sent on CW and delivered by bicycle to the studio located over Grinter Drug Store on Market street. Glen Wilson had the early shift and would prepare his breakfast in the station, holding the mike down near the skillet to broadcast the sound of the frying food. The studio later moved to next to the Smoot Theater on Fifth Street and a later studio fire destroyed the extensive record collection. The tower was located in North Parkersburg because the site was swampy and made for better transmission. A few years ago, a stolen bulldozer ran over the guy wires and caused the tower to collapse. Curt K8UC has 60 feet of the destroyed tower. The tower was rebuilt until being torn down around May 9 this year. The last call sign was WHNK operating at 1 Kw.

President Jerry Wharton WA8NJW opened the business meeting at 7:08 PM. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved and the treasurer's report was given by Jane N8MOW, treasurer.

Unfinished business: Earl KB8HRG reported that the space for the storage building at the 146.970 site is limited but possible. And mowing is needed right away. There appears to be no way to transport the mowers to the site.

Field day: The shelter has been reserved; need to check on using the cabin again this year. Al KE8UN will bring his station, Curt K8UC will bring his CW station if enough operators can be found, Dan WV8X will set up the network, Jim K8BOT will bring a VHF station and Earl KB8HRG will bring antennas. There will be a covered dish picnic Saturday at 6 PM with Blaine WA8IOE doing the grilling.

New business: Due to the low attendance and cost of building and food (about \$120) at the Christmas party, it was discussed about having it this year at the restaurant. Curt K8UC moved to spend \$5 per person on the December meal and later withdrew his motion. Blaine WA8IOE moved and Jane N8MOW seconded to hold the December 8 meeting at Western Sizzlin Restaurant. The motion carried and the room has been reserved.

Earl KB8HRG reported that the club has several old GE and Motorola repeaters no longer being used since we have the newer ones that were donated to the club. Dave N8NWV moved and Earl seconded to send them to the Dayton Hamvention with Dan WV8X to try to sell. The motion carried.

Art W8PBO has not had his surgery yet and no date has been scheduled. Precious K8BXW is now in the WV Masonic Home.

Jim K8BOT moved and Glen K8PSK seconded to adjourn at 7:52 PM.

June 9, 2014

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub met at the Western Sizzlin Restaurant for the June meeting. Our meeting room was not available due to an overbooking. We were spread out on one long table where communications were not the best.

There were 24 members and guests present. President Jerry Wharton KA8NJW opened the meeting at 7 PM. No introductions were made due to the above mentioned problem. The minutes and treasurer's report were not given also.

The 50/50 drawing of \$8.50 was won by Mary Wharton.

Field day plans were discussed. A planning meeting will be held at the Fort Boreman site on Tuesday June 24 at 6:30 PM. W8PAR will be the call used. A key is still needed to the cabin. Dan WV8X has 3 computers to set up for logging. There will be 3 operating stations. There is a need to get operators to commit to operating. A list will be started around the net tomorrow night.

I was not able to get all details due to the poor audio conditions in the public area of the restaurant.

Dan WV8X made a motion to adjourn and there were lots of seconds. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.

The restaurant did apologize for the reservation mix up.

July 14, 2014

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub met at the Western Sizzlin restaurant for the July meeting. Introductions were made by 31 members and guests.

Before the meeting, Jim K8BOT gave a talk about his experiences in amateur radio.

Vice president Earl Hulce KB8HRG called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM. The 50/50 drawing of \$18.50 was won by Kendall Cain.

The minutes of the May and June meetings were read and approved and the treasurer's report was given by Jane N8MOW, treasurer.

Unfinished business: Dan WV8X was not present to give the field day report. Earl KB8HRG made some comments about the enjoyment of those attending.

New business: Membership applications were submitted for Bob Combs KD8YZF and David McDonald KD8YVC. Blaine WA8IOE moved and Jim K8BOT seconded to accept them into membership. The motion carried.

Blaine WA8IOE announced that he has a variety of ham stuff that was donated by Art W8PBO for anyone that has a need for them. They are not to be sold or any profit to be made from them. Art also has some radios for sale.

Ken WA8LLM still has one or two spots open for the half marathon and he is making timing clocks to be used for next year's race.

A sheet was passed around from the WV State Council for anyone wishing to have their name published in the yearly program for a \$1 donation.

The WCEC August 4 meeting will be a covered dish picnic and all are invited.

Earl KB8HRG appointed the following committees: Jeannia N8JMD and Libby KA8FUA to the auditing committee, and Earl KB8HRG and John W8IDW to the nominating committee.

Ken announced that for the WCEC October 11 hamfest, the tables will be free if reserved at least a week in advance. Major prizes will be a HF, a mobile and a handheld radio, and with a 900 watt generator as a door prize. Testing will also be conducted.

Ohio now requires to see a valid amateur license in order to renew a vehicle registration.

Because only half of the room will be available in December, it was mentioned of the possibility of moving the party to a better location. No decision was made.

Jim K8BOT moved and Dave N8NWV seconded to adjourn about 8 PM.

The ARRL Volunteer Examiner Coordinator (VEC) administered several Amateur Radio examination elements to applicants at Amundsen-South Pole Station in Antarctica -- the home of KC4AAA. The examination was the first administered under new FCC rules which became effective on July 21, permitting VECs to administer Amateur Radio examinations remotely.

"All six candidates earned a new or upgrade license," said ARRL VEC Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM. There were three new Technicians, two upgrades to Amateur Extra, and one candidate who went from unlicensed to Amateur Extra."

Joe Musachia, W5FJG, served as the volunteer examiner at the South Pole, while Penny Harts, N1NAG, and Rose-Anne Lawrence, KB1DMW, were the VEs at ARRL Headquarters.

"Chet Waggoner and Bartley Davis are the first at the South Pole and possibly on the continent to pass the General exam," Musachia said in a posting on the ARRL Facebook page. Two previous exam sessions were held at the South Pole, but special permission from the FCC was required to conduct them.

The view of the South Pole remote test session as seen at ARRL Headquarters via satellite link: In the inset at the lower right of the screen ARRL VEC Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM, speaks with the exam administrator and candidates at the South Pole. [Amanda Grimaldi, KB1VUV, photo]

The logistics were somewhat daunting, since the video link required a satellite connection and clearance from NASA, and it was subject to possible last-minute changes, should the International Space Station require additional Satcom time. Musachia, who is the satellite engineer at the station, said NASA was aware that the VEs had requested a large block of time to perform the exam session and did not change it.

Somma said the video exam session went ahead as scheduled on July 22 at 8 AM EDT, which was 8 PM in Antarctica. "The summer day was a pleasant 80° here at Headquarters in Newington, while in Antarctica it was 80 below!" she pointed out.

"All of us here at the South Pole want to extend our thanks to you and the VEC team at the ARRL for making this license exam session happen," Musachia said in an e-mail to ARRL Headquarters. "We all just finished a bottle of champagne to celebrate the newly licensed and upgraded Amateur Radio operators. We wish you all could have joined us."

HAARP Closing Delayed, But Facility Being Dismantled Piecemeal

The US Air Force has given the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP) facility in Gakona, Alaska, a death row reprieve of sorts. The Secretary of the Air Force told Alaska Sen Lisa Murkowski July 2 that it is "willing to slow the closure process and defer irreversible dismantling of the transmitter site" until May 2015. Those pushing for HAARP to remain open as a scientific research facility include several radio amateurs. HAARP proponents claim, however, that despite the delay, the Air Force has been picking the plant apart piece by piece, and that critical research instruments already have been taken off site.

University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Professor Chris Fallen, KL3WX, who has conducted research at HAARP, told ARRL that it was his "unofficial understanding" that the Air Force has already rendered HAARP reversibly inoperable through the removal or relocation of critical diagnostic instruments, instrument shelters, office furniture, and even tubes for the multiple transmitters. HAARP's transmitters are capable of generating more than 3 gigawatts of RF in the HF spectrum, which its 180 antennas can direct upward to the ionosphere.

Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James told Murkowski that the Air Force "will proceed with removal of government property not essential to operations and will seek to reduce maintenance costs through additional storage of equipment and winterization; however, we will retain critical hardware to maximize the potential to reactivate the site, should it be transferred to another federal government agency or a private entity next year."

In May Murkowski raised questions in Congress about the impending HAARP closure, and she took some credit for the shutdown delay. Murkowski had questioned why the Pentagon was planning to demolish HAARP, "asking whether it was fiscally sound to destroy an approximately \$300 million facility when it costs less than one percent of that amount to operate it each year," a news release from her office said. She said she supports handing control of HAARP over to the University of Alaska or another research entity to "keep the world-class facility open and running."

"The [news release] states that the Air Force is in the process of removing 'non-critical' equipment, which essentially means anything not bolted to the floor such as generators, amplifiers, antennae, and control systems," Fallen asserted. "While I would consider the diagnostic instruments as 'critical' to an ionosphere modification observatory, this apparently is not a universal interpretation." He said HAARP's diagnostic instruments, including the riometer and ionosonde, have not been available since June 2013 and are in immediate danger of being removed. Hams in Alaska have used data from both instruments in conducting their own ionospheric investigations.

UAF has been engaged in discussions with the Air Force with an eye toward taking over HAARP, although it's not clear that these have gained any serious traction. The Air Force, the US Navy, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) have determined they no longer need HAARP, and the military would like to get the sprawling \$300 million facility off its books — if not by finding another entity to run it, then by razing it altogether.

Fallen conceded that an uphill battle lies ahead to build a case to keep HAARP open, and he doesn't see that happening without "one or more large benefactors" coming forward to bridge the funding gap. "UAF or any organization that wants to sustain HAARP through external funding is essentially in a situation where it's trying to sell the Brooklyn Bridge, or least passes to it," Fallen quipped. "In a way it's worse, since it's like the asphalt from the bridge is being removed by the state in the process."

Fallen believes HAARP has "unique relevance to hams" and could become a self-sustaining facility. He said that if the dismantling of HAARP can be halted and operations or ownership transferred to UAF or another agency, "I will do everything in my power to maintain and expand access of the facility to US hams." Fallen

said he will attend tonight's (Friday, July 11) meeting of the Arctic Amateur Radio Club (AARC) in Fairbanks to drum up support for HAARP's preservation.

Ham radio author and researcher Eric Nichols, KL7AJ, said he plans to talk about HAARP at tonight's AARC meeting. The author of *Radio Science for the Radio Amateur* and articles in *QST* — Nichols has said the loss of HAARP would be “a great loss to interior Alaska hams and many others.”

Fallen said he'll distribute template letters at the AARC meeting asking for preservation of the HAARP facility. He is encouraging hams to personalize the letters as needed and send copies to US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel as well as to their congressional representatives.

“The US Government at all levels is receptive to citizen input,” he said. “The letter-writing campaign from scientists organized by the UAF Geophysical Institute has succeeded in delaying irreversible demolition of HAARP.”