

**Report of the President
ARRL Board of Directors
July 2017**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to provide this Report to you as President. It continues to be a great honor to serve as an Officer of the League.

The Next Generation for Amateur Radio

I made some comments about the next generation for Amateur Radio in my letter for the ARRL Annual Report and they are worth mentioning again here. I'd like to think that the members of this Board are the movers and shakers of Amateur Radio. You would not have been elected to your position on the Board if someone didn't think you exhibited certain qualities such as leadership and forward thinking. We all need to be thinking about that forward motion, and at no time is that more apparent than when talking to young people about Amateur Radio.

Last year, I had the opportunity to speak to a high school group. I prepared my usual talk about some interesting ham radio stories over my 50 years as a ham, how we can talk all over the world, and I brought some QSL cards from rare places to show the group. I have given that talk many times, and it usually impresses people — but not this time. I was surprised to see flat, uninterested faces.

I realized that I had to change my approach to the presentation if I was going to keep the attention of these young people. After all, what could ham radio offer people who grew up in homes that had computers hooked up to the internet? Today's young people are used to riding down the interstate as a passenger in a car at 70 MPH while watching high-definition videos on their iPhones. I quickly shifted the focus to discuss how ham radio has changed, the new technologies, the computerization of ham radio, and Raspberry Pi. I explained the newer digital modes, and talked about ham radio experimentation. The group lit up. I had found the topics where ham radio touches that world — their world — and told them what was possible. They responded. That was a wakeup call for me.

What we're hearing from what I call the "new generation ham" is that they don't view ham radio as being about talking around the world, contesting or traditional aspects of our hobby. This next generation of ham radio operators view ham radio as a communications medium. Ham radio has value as the means to accomplish an act — the value is not in the act itself. So the question is, how do we rebrand Amateur Radio to recruit people who view it as a means to an end?

Many hams are traditionalists. I count myself among them. Change generally doesn't come easy to us. But when I looked out at that group of young faces and saw their disinterest in traditional ham pursuits, I realized that I had to change. We have to change. It won't come easy, but it's essential that we get to work on it now.

Are we still in tune with that new generation ham? How do we break the stereotype of ham radio being a bunch of old people filling a corner in a dusty attic, as a former Director whom I highly respected used to say (Mr. Marshall Quiat). Maybe it is time to rebrand ourselves; to rebrand Amateur Radio; to rebrand the ARRL.

The League needs to aggressively support new ways to inspire interest in ham radio. We need to recruit people into Amateur Radio in new ways and from points of entry that maybe we hadn't considered much up to now: college clubs, citizen science, and Maker Faires. Think about ways you can help Amateur Radio grow, especially tapping into the next generation of ham who is going to be different than you. Think about new ways to attract that next generation. Reach out to someone who doesn't know about ham radio, and remember, it may not be what you yourself are interested in. How successful we can be if we approach them offering the knowledge they truly want, rather than the knowledge we think they should want!

It's going to take all of us to attract and retain a younger generation of Amateur Radio operators. And never underestimate the influence you have on others; the group of students that presented blank faces to my trusty presentation that had worked so well for many years, sure had an influence on me.

2017 - Let's Move Forward

That's still the plan - to move forward. In my January report, I mentioned what a challenging year we had come through. I guess that I could say the same about the past six months given the significant discussions we've had about board governance and structure. No doubt there's been some emotional discussions but they were necessary discussions.

I recall talking about some of these issues with Vice Directors in January and even told some of them that they may not like the answer, but as I reiterated in an ODV message on February 5, we were going to address their Vice Director standing and I pledged to clean up this issue once and for all. I am hopeful that in this board meeting we can resolve these issues, put a stake the ground, and move forward together. We have so many issues facing the future of Amateur Radio, and the League. We must focus on solving those challenges.

Membership Totals

We need to get our membership numbers back up. For the first quarter, each month was -3.7% versus last year and with each Division still negative. Unfortunately, the reality is we are still fighting the negative reaction to the dues increase.

Tom Frenaye sent ODV some very good charts recently of historical membership data (21 pages). The most alarming chart to me was the first one that showed 17 years of membership totals. The striking feature of that chart was what it showed the last time we had a dues increase. It showed 5 years and 10 months of declining membership. If that correlation holds true this time, we will not bottom out until 4 years and 3 months from now (October, 2021). We can't let that happen. We've got to focus on things to turn this around. It may mean we try things we've never done before but it's time to take a hard look in the mirror and ask ourselves some hard questions about what we need to change to do better. Maybe we need to open our mind to change.

License Review Committee

One area that we might need to open our mind to change is the license structure. I'm encouraged by the work of the License Review Committee and am hopeful we can learn some new things to consider about our license structure when the Committee finalizes its recommendations. The fact that the committee received over 8000 comments is quite amazing. So let's keep an open mind.

As I have gone around the country giving talks, I've already heard many times that we are attempting to "dumb down" Amateur Radio and just get a bunch of new hams so we can collect more dues. However, people start to be more receptive when you discuss the changing landscape of Amateur Radio, the state of the hobby, the future, the need for change, and foremost that our efforts are an attempt to approach a whole new generation of different interests in Amateur Radio. Bottom line, we need to tap into a new generation.

Amateur Radio Parity Act

I want to thank Mike Lisenco and Chris Imlay for their continued efforts in support of the Amateur Radio Parity Act. It's not been an easy task and working with legislation can be so challenging. I know they get depressed at times, especially given what we have been through thus far. However, they have not quit. We don't see their efforts day to day. It takes patience, but the Legislative Team is continually working on strategy, alternatives, and opportunities to push our legislation through.

Staff

Our organization is made up of a lot of great people. I want to thank Staff and all of our volunteers for their devotion to the League and Amateur Radio. I receive compliments everywhere I go and I'm so proud to be associated with such fine people.

Likewise, I'm proud to serve with the members of this Board. There's been a lot of emotions shown these past six months. I'm confident that we can come together and move forward from here making Amateur Radio and the League better than its ever been.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Roderick - K5UR

President