

**Report of the President
ARRL Board of Directors
January 2019**

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

This will be the fourth report where I have started with this heading. It still seems appropriate to do so again. I am worried about the growth of Amateur Radio. Where is the next generation of Amateur Radio? What things can the League do to assure there will be Amateur Radio 100 years from today? What will be your individual legacy that you leave for this wonderful hobby?

For years as I go around the United States giving speeches, I have challenged groups to ask similar questions and embark on initiatives in their clubs to grow Amateur Radio. Interestingly, in the past year as I meet various groups, I have encountered more worry and concern about the future of the hobby than ever before. The concern that Amateur Radio is not growing and that the landscape of operators has changed is finally hitting home in a big way. Perhaps that's good, for we need an army of hams working to build the hobby. They also need a League that will help them accomplish better recruiting and retention. They need a League that will support their efforts in any way possible. They need a League that will focus on our members and listen to their ideas, their suggestions and their input. That may require us to "think out of the box," or it may require us to try some things that we've never done before. I can't stress that enough. That's the challenge we all must accept. It's on our watch.

You've heard me say this before, and it's worth saying again, to grow and survive, we must do better at addressing these changing times. Let's honor our past ways but let's be leaders and move forward embracing the future.

Growth and Membership

I've spoken in the past of what I believe is a disconnect that we have with many hams, like us on the Board, for example, and the new generation. We don't look like the new generation ham. Recall that 51% of Amateurs today hold a Technician class license, and about 84% of them do not even belong to the League. Talk about a disconnect!

Is Amateur Radio growing? Not really. When you consider the new hams and those that drop off, the net increase of new licensees per year is only about 6,500 for the past three years. That is not a healthy number and it ought to scare the daylights out of all of us. I fear that number will get even worse when you look at the age demographics of hams.

As I mentioned in the first section, we must aggressively focus on our members, their needs, their ideas, and the services the League provides to help grow and sustain our hobby. It's not all about growth, we have to focus on retention, too. Hopefully, the FCC will eventually move forward on our Entry Level License petition which seeks to modernize and enhance the Technician license privileges and bring it more in line with what the next generation operator needs today.

On the positive side, we should be turning the corner on membership numbers now that we are three years down the road from the dues increase. The numbers are tracking a little better than planned and are generally in line with the trend from the dues increase before the one in 2016 which indicated an upturn about this time in the cycle.

It's a changing landscape. To help us address this challenge, our Staff continues to work with Mintz & Hoke to explore opportunities for what I consider to be significant change in our approach with members. The lifelong learning concept is exciting as well as a way to better connect. We hope to engage new strategies for the various segments of our hobby, and essentially rebrand ourselves. You've heard me use that term before and I know it makes some of us old hats cringe, but I firmly believe we need to rebrand both the ARRL and also Amateur Radio to better adapt to these changing times. I sincerely hope the Board will support continuing with these initiatives to accomplish this challenge. I know change doesn't come easy for us traditionalists, but think of the future and think of the changing landscape and you can't help but realize we must adapt and better address our member needs. That will mean change to attract and retain that next generation.

Public Service Enhancement Working Group (PSEWG)

I want to say a few words about the Public Service Enhancement Working Group (PSEWG).

The PSEWG completed a comprehensive study of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and presented findings at the July 2018 Board meeting. The Board asked the group to establish a three-month general comment period for the ARES Strategic Plan, which has been completed. It's now incumbent on us to review their final report and be prepared to take action to adopt the Plan.

I realize to adopt the Plan will require some changes in field operations, and those changes won't come easy. We had resistance from some of our field volunteers but hopefully by providing a specific three month comment period, we assured that everyone had a chance to provide input for consideration.

It is essential that we adopt the Strategic Plan to upgrade and advance ARES for the future.

From the beginning of this project, three years ago, I have been on a good number of the almost weekly telephone conferences this group has held. They've done a mountain of work and are to be commended. This was a huge undertaking. Thank you.

Welcome

Speaking of exciting and changing times, we have a new Chief Executive Officer and a few new Board members. Welcome!

I have had great pleasure in working with our new CEO, Dr. Howard Michel. I'm very optimistic about his ideas for change, for building a team concept and for focusing on member-driven needs and initiatives. Let's stand with him and support his ideas and recommendations.

And to the new members on the Board, we welcome you and appreciate your commitment to the League and to Amateur Radio. I think you will find it challenging and rewarding to be on the Board. I look forward to working with you to get things done for the greatest hobby in the world.

Staff

Our Headquarters Staff is fantastic! They are great ambassadors of the League and Amateur Radio. I remain so proud of them and the job they do. That goes for all of the volunteers as well. Thank you!

I also want to thank the Board for your work and devotion to Amateur Radio and the League. I'm proud to serve alongside you. It's always a pleasure to travel to the various Divisions, meeting your constituents and seeing the work you are doing for the betterment of Amateur Radio.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Roderick - K5UR
President