**Doc. #24**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Report of the Ad Hoc Legislative Advocacy Committee, dated July 13, 2020**

On Thursday evening, January 16, 2020, just prior to the League’s Annual Board meeting in January of 2020, the Committee led an extensive Board discussion of its efforts in developing drafts of potential legislation to be introduced into Congress this year.

As a follow-up to Thursday evening’s discussion, the following Motion was moved by Mr. Tiemstra and seconded by Mr. Abernethy:

**Whereas**, the ability of the Amateur Radio service to maintain and expand its benefits to the public rests on the ability to install and operate effective Amateur Radio stations; and

**Whereas**, the Ad Hoc Legislative Advocacy Committee has provided the Board with drafts of three approaches to model legislation affording the League’s membership with relief from private land use restrictions; and

**Whereas**, it would be beneficial to the achievement of this goal to obtain the input and advice of the League’s lobbyists and its sponsors and legislative assistants in Congress; and

**Whereas**, the process of achieving the adoption of such legislation necessarily involves discussion, negotiation and possible alterations by or in response to the League’s advisors and sponsors:

**NOW, THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that the draft legislation presented to and discussed by the Board describing different but acceptable approaches to obtain relief from private land use restrictions impacting Amateur Radio station antenna structures are approved as presented and possibly modified, and directs the Ad Hoc Legislative Advocacy Committee to proceed to obtain Congressional sponsorship, employing any of these three approaches and using its best judgement on any alterations or modifications that our advisors or sponsors may require or suggest.

The motion was APPROVED by the Board following discussion.

The Committee met by teleconference on February 6 to plan implementation of the legislative strategy outlined to the Board. The plan contemplated vetting our drafts of potential legislation with our former co-sponsors while continuing to build a coalition in support of our efforts. Representatives Kinzinger, Courtney and Walden were obvious initial contacts in the House, and Senator Wicker, Chair of the Commerce Committee in the Senate. The Keelen Group (TKG) had a dinner scheduled with Wicker in the following week, and had provided his staff with copies of our draft legislation for review and comment. By the end of February, the Committee reviewed and entered into another one year Government Affairs Contract with The Keelen Group.

Our schedule contemplated sending delegations to the Hill before the Easter break, sometime in the second week of March to line up our sponsors and answer any questions they might have. However, at about this time, the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to have effects on Washington politics and scheduling. We learned that we might have to plan a smaller delegation and found out that business was beginning to be conducted by teleconference, but continued to believe that we were close to dropping a bill. Ultimately, all business being conducted on the Hill would be by telephone conferences.

Congress’ focus on major COVID funding legislation seriously slowed our ability to get audiences even by teleconference with Congressional staff. By mid-March, however, the crisis seemed to strengthen the “homeland security, Emcom and critical infrastructure” aspects of our strategy. In fact, the State of Texas even designated the Amateur Radio Service as part of its critical infrastructure. On March 16, the Committee met by teleconference to discuss our progress, the potential usefulness of emergency legislation being proposed as a vehicle for our bill and the option of seeking an Executive Order for temporary recognition as “critical infrastructure”. We also discussed various obstacles to those approaches.

Meanwhile, by the beginning of April, we were finally advised by Wicker’s staff that they preferred the long form of our draft legislation to which they provided some minor suggested edits. Those edits were incorporated into what is now the version attached to this Report as Appendix 1.

The Committee met by video conference again on April 13, 2020. Wicker’s comments were discussed as well as our Congressional strategy, alternative legislation, possibly even on the state level, along with the residual possibility of an Executive Order. A letter to the President, dated July 13, 2020, was drafted for President Roderick’s signature and sent to the White House, a copy of which is attached to this Report as Appendix 2. At present, we are awaiting a response. In addition, the Committee authorized Keelen to convey to Rep. Kinzinger the Committee’s desire to move forward with the revised bill and solicit co-sponsors.

Simultaneously, a campaign was pursued by Director Stratton, with the assistance of Keelen, to obtain co-sponsors from the Congressional delegations of the West Gulf Division and to capitalize on the designation of the Amateur Radio Service as critical infra-structure. Telephone conferences were set up throughout April and May which, in general, were positively received. Of course, some offices were more familiar with the Amateur Radio Service and the issue concerning private land use restrictions than others. A list of the offices conferenced with is attached to this Report as Appendix 3.

A follow-up Committee meeting was held on May 21, 2020. Updates regarding the revised draft legislation, and co-sponsor prospects such as Senator Cantwell and the Texas delegation were discussed. Despite continuing efforts, Keelen described the difficulties they were having in scheduling time with Senator Blumenthal and Rep. Courtney’s offices our prospective Democratic co-sponsors. We talked briefly about the value of having a DC Government Relations Officer which is provided for in the current ARRL budget, but not yet in place.

As of the Committee’s June 11, meeting, it appeared that Senator Wicker along with Reps. Kinzinger and Walden were lined up to be sponsors, even though Walden had some questions about the bill’s language that were subsequently clarified. A conference call was finally scheduled with Rep. Courtney’s office which included our President and CEO, and it was expected that a similar call would be set up for Senator Blumenthal. It was agreed that regional conference calls to Congressional offices would commence once the bill is dropped, and a letter writing and publicity campaign for passage would follow. At that point, we would also elicit the support of our DC friends who have been patiently awaiting our actions.

At the Committee’s meeting on June 23, Committee Member, Wareham reported on his attendance at the town hall meeting with Senator Gardner conducted by video conference with Senator Wicker. (Unfortunately, Senator Wicker had to excuse himself from the call prior to Robert being called upon to make a comment.) Mr. Wareham related our past attempts at getting bills through Congress that were blocked by Senator Nelson, a fact which seemed to be acknowledged by Senator Gardner. Mr. Wareham also reported that he had spoken to staffers in the Senator’s Regional office about the ARRL’s improved legislation that we hope to get passed this year. Senator Gardner stated that he recalled the bill and would follow up with his staff on our discussion. The Senator has a difficult re-election campaign, and we seem to have the seeds planted with him on our interests.

President Roderick reported that the teleconference with Rep. Courtney’s office went well and that our emphasis on the Emcom side and our identification by DHS as critical infrastructure seem to be having the most influence on Congress during our conferences with staff.

We continue to discuss a schedule for introducing the legislation as a stand-alone bill despite the distractions of COVID-19 legislation. We need to get the Connecticut delegation on board as sponsors and attach our bill to moving legislation this year, if possible. The Committee held a final video conference meeting on July 10, 2020, to discuss its Report, review the status of the request for an Executive Order and the final schedule for introducing legislation. A separate Report by The Keelen Group is attached to this Report as Appendix 4.

Respectfully submitted,

James A. Tiemstra, K6JAT, Chair

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