

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's)	RM-11828
Rules Governing the Amateur Radio Service)	
Rules Concerning Permitted Emissions)	
and Operating Privileges for Technician Class)	
Licensees)	

To: The Chief, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau

Via: ECFS Electronic Filing

March 16, 2019

COMMENTS OF DAN WHITE, W5DNT

Thank you for allowing me to voice **STRONG OBJECTION** to this proposed rulemaking request, RM-11828, filed by Chris Imlay on behalf of the "American Radio Relay League" (ARRL).

By background, I am a Registered Professional Engineer and an Amateur Extra Class license holder, first licensed in 1971. I have operated most all modes of amateur communication, including WINLINK and PACTOR, and am involved in Emergency Communications in an official leadership capacity in two Texas counties, as the RACES Radio Officer and ARES Emergency Coordinator for both counties. My interests in amateur radio are very diverse and widespread, not those of a "special interest group" such as those that have pushed for RM-11708 and NPRM 16-239, as a way to provide free encrypted email and bypass commercial maritime services under the guise of "emergency communications" while exhibiting total disregard for incumbent spectrum users. The proposed RM 11828 is a back handed attempt to dramatically, and I believe deliberately, further that cause, instantly granting HF digital privileges to 385,000 entry level amateurs and substantially lowering the HF bar to untrained newcomers. When combined with the

potential approval of NPRM 16-239, the results of RM-11828 would be nothing short of devastating to our hobby!

Furthermore, I am a Life Member of the ARRL and have been a major financial contributor to the ARRL over many years. Having said that, it brings me no pleasure to openly and strongly disagree with the ARRL, but based on the current situation and the very serious ramifications of this RM, especially when coupled with the disastrous potential approval of NPRM 16-239, I am left with no alternative but to openly do so. I simply could not disagree more with the ARRL with regard to their original RM-11708 rulemaking request, NPRM 16-239 and now what would be the “icing on the cake” for ARRL, any further consideration or approval of RM-11828. This entire chain of events, a spillover from ARRL’s former General Counsel Chris Imlay’s tenure, which ignores the concerns of many thousands of existing long-time radio amateurs, has been from the very beginning at best a very one-sided approach that would allow “special interest” spectrum use at the expense of the traditional modes of CW and RTTY. ARRL membership only represents about 21% of all U.S. amateurs. As ARRL develops proposed changes to amateur radio such as these, they seem to operate in a relative vacuum from the desires of their own membership, much less those of all U.S. amateurs. Obviously, ARRL’s main focus is to increase their own membership even if it means a “dumbing down” of the process, which they now are clearly seeking to do through RM-11828. ARRL most certainly does not represent my interests, nor the interests of hundreds of friends I have that are heavily committed to this hobby as serious amateurs.

RM-11828 would actually create the ultimate dis-incentive to further advancement for hundreds of thousands of folks that have chosen not to take the time to pursue education, and advancement through incentive licensing and the privileges it offers. About 55% of the total General Class HF phone allocation would be given away to entry level Technicians, without any further effort on their part. This includes 60% of the General Class phone band on 40 m. Digital HF email for Technicians is a major driving force behind this rulemaking request by ARRL. Alarming, it would instantly allow a Technician, with no training or testing requirements with digital operations, to be the Control Operator for an automatic “store and forward” email server operating in HF spectrum, with no proven knowledge of its basic user functions! If coupled with approval of NPRM 16-239, these untrained entry level licensees would now be able to operate and or control email servers with unlimited bandwidth in the current CW, RTTY and FT-8 HF spectrum!

Could ARRL believe, when they ultimately transform amateur radio to nothing more than a digital “no man’s land”, their membership ranks and dues income will increase? The answer seems rather obvious. By granting, with simply the stroke of a pen, instant HF access to 385,000 entry level folks, the potential for problems is simply unacceptable. The current Technician privileges grant adequate HF access to motivate a person to seek further knowledge and progress in the hobby, with limited potential for problems associated with a learning curve on global HF bands. It allows ample VHF spectrum to develop skills necessary prior to more widespread global HF operations. Unlike the very basic “study the weekend before” entry level Technician exam, the General exam does address competency to correctly use digital modes and important items in the General Class Question Pool cover this topic. General Class licensing is not a burdensome requirement that warrants change because it unduly limits participation in HF operations. The answer is simple! Study and learn via incentive licensing, the ARRL even sells excellent Study Guides.

In 2006 when ARRL made a similar proposal, I believe the FCC got it right in their opinion! In the related FCC Order 06-178, Amateur Licensing requirements were fully addressed. FCC had this to say about an ARRL proposed entry level license with expanded HF privileges. *“In the NPRM, the Commission denied several requests for establishment of a new introductory operator license that would not have a Morse code requirement but would give licensees access to the VHF and UHF amateur bands and limited telegraphy, data and voice privileges in the HF bands. The Commission reasoned that eliminating telegraphy testing, as we do here today, would make the introductory class license superfluous because new entrants could qualify for a General Class license by passing two examination elements. Thereby, the new entrant would be afforded access to significantly more spectrum than contemplated for the introductory class license.”*

FCC went on to say, *“Additionally, we are declining ARRL’s request that Novice and Technician Class licensees be given voice and image privileges in certain segments of the 80, 40, 15 and 10 m bands. Our action today giving Technician Class licensees the same privileges as Technician Plus Class licensees does effectively provide some of the relief ARRL seeks because Technician class licensees now have voice and digital privileges in the 10 m HF band. However, we are concerned that giving Novice and Technician class licensees voice privileges in the other HF bands would be a disincentive for these licensees to improve their knowledge and skills and attain a higher-class license. Passing the thirty-five-question written examination for the intermediate class of license -- the General Class -- is well within the capability of most, if not all, Technician and Technician Plus licensees, particularly given the study guides and other aids available from, among others, the ARRL.*

However, providing the complete relief ARRL requests and removing most of the “reward” for passing the examination -- access to other HF bands -- would likewise remove the incentive to do so and would be inconsistent with the Commission’s rationale for establishing different operator license classes. We therefore are not persuaded that we should make further changes in the operating privileges attendant on the current license classes given the record before us.”

Bravo FCC!!!

ARRL’s filing refers to RM-11759 as not being superseded by RM-11828. RM-11759 seeks to grant Technicians data privileges with the bottom 50 KHz of the current 80 m Extra Class phone band. For exactly the same reasons cited above by FCC, RM-11759 should be rejected outright.

ARRL has failed to prove their proposed “free” privileges actually create further incentives for advancement in the hobby. Rather they lower the bar substantially, and when coupled with NPRM 16-239, would open the HF bands up to unlimited numbers of blue water sailors and doomsday preppers that would seek to use HF as their own free or off the grid encrypted broadband email service. Furthermore, it reinforces a lax mind set with newcomers that would lead to and encourage even more “callsign sharing” and unlicensed “freebender” activities. Perhaps those are the vast hordes of newcomers ARRL really wishes to collect membership and licensing fees from, and that ARSFI wishes to collect software “registration fees” and “suggested annual donations” from.

Upon closer inspection, this proposal is self-serving by its very nature and definitely not in the best interest of amateur radio. Education and skill advancement have been hallmarks of the Amateur Service, this proposal clearly provides for neither; rather it serves to circumvent the whole concept of incentive licensing.

In summary, I strongly urge the FCC to a) reject and dismiss RM-11828 without any positive action; and b) reject both RM-11759 and NPRM 16-239.

Respectfully submitted,

By: Dan White

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