

# ARRL: Circling the Wagons

Just what is the ARRL is afraid of? The League's top leadership appears to be continuing and expanding its efforts to centralize decision-making in Newington and to closely control the flow of information about the organization and its activities. In doing so, it is changing the nature of the organization and depriving members in certain divisions the opportunity to choose their representatives.

Historically, ARRL leadership volunteers around the country have been given a significant amount of autonomy in how they carry out their roles and in the relationships they build with local and regional leaders of served agencies. The staff in Newington served primarily as a resource, offering assistance as needed and guidance as requested. This made a lot of sense, as needs varied in different areas and a "one-size-fits-all" approach would not be effective.

Over the last year-and-a-half, though, that model of decentralized decision-making has been changing, as the League's new leadership has worked consistently to consolidate power and stifle dissent. It started in June of 2016, when the ARRL's executive committee removed the Eastern Area Chair of the National Traffic System from both that post and his elected position as Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager, allegedly for communicating with officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on behalf of NTS and making commitments on behalf of ARRL without authority. League headquarters followed up by "temporarily" assuming direct control of making leadership appointments in NTS, whose top staff had traditionally chosen their own leaders. Many of those top-level traffic handlers then resigned in protest and formed a new organization for passing long-haul traffic outside of ARRL auspices.

A few months later, the League board's Elections and Ethics Committee disqualified a sitting director from seeking re-election, apparently based on actions taken after the ballots were already in the mail. Rather than cancelling the election and putting out a new call for nominations, however, the League simply declared that the director's opponent — a former director who had been defeated two years earlier for re-election — had been declared elected, although it was never clear just who elected him. Members in that division were never informed that their incumbent director had been disqualified, or why. It is noteworthy that this director was a strong proponent of greater openness in League decision-making; and the actions taken to keep him from seeking re-election were taken in secret.

This past January, the ARRL board codified that secrecy when it adopted a new "Policy on Board Governance and Conduct of Members..." This new policy required that directors and vice directors publicly support all actions taken by the board — even if they opposed those actions prior to their adoption — and prohibited them from disclosing any individual director's vote on a matter — even *their own* vote — without express board permission.

Next, this summer, the Elections and Ethics Committee was at it again, this time disqualifying a sitting vice director from running for director and again not telling the division's membership. Rather, there was only a cryptic statement in a news release that the incumbent director had "qualified for re-election." We have learned that the vice director was disqualified for

allegedly failing to disclose a conflict of interest, but that when he asked for specifics about that supposed conflict, his requests were ignored. In addition, he requested a hearing by the full board on the disqualification — as he is allowed to do under the ARRL by-laws — but his request was denied. To the best of our knowledge, he has not yet been told what the alleged conflict was that prompted his disqualification.

Finally, as Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria ravaged various parts of the Caribbean and U.S. coasts, local ARRL Public Information Officers were essentially told not to talk with the media about ham radio activities but rather to direct all media inquiries to ARRL Headquarters (which, at the time, was without a media relations manager). In addition, headquarters shut down the League's public relations reflector, which had been a very useful tool for PIOs to compare notes and for Newington to provide guidance in their dealings with the media.

The impression one gets here is of an organization that perceives itself to be under siege and is circling the wagons to more effectively defend itself. But from whom? Who is the enemy? Its members? Its leadership volunteers who have devoted thousands of hours of personal time and more to carrying out their assigned roles? Its own elected officials who might not agree with actions taken by the majority of their colleagues? People seeking elected office who might disagree with the top leaders?

Just who is the enemy and what are the folks in Newington and on the board's executive committee so afraid of? And why all the secrecy? These are questions that League members need to ask themselves and their elected representatives; and they need to make sure they are not denied the right to vote for who those elected representatives will be. It's happened twice in the past year and a half; it's likely to happen again. How long will the members allow it to continue?

## Technology Special

If it's December, it must be time for our annual Technology Special, and as usual, we examine some of the most interesting and innovative ideas in amateur radio technology today. We start with the use of WSPR — K1JT's Weak Signal Propagation Reporter software — to analyze changes in HF propagation during last summer's total solar eclipse. We tell you how to use GPS satellites to set your computer clock during portable operations (especially important for some digital modes and for contest logging). And we introduce a program that will let you transmit a complete schematic diagram over the air, using virtually any mode of transmission, even CW!

There's more, of course, along with a comprehensive review of the ham radio response to the summer's hurricanes in Texas, along the Gulf Coast and in the Caribbean, including first-person reports from Puerto Rico and Dominica.

## Happy Holidays

As always, we hope that your holiday celebrations at this time of year bring added light to your days as we pass through the darkness of the winter solstice, along with good DX on our wintertime bands, which now include 630 and 2200 meters. [By the way, in case you don't think DX is doable on these bands, check out our news page for a report of a 12,000-kilometer (7,450-mile) two-way QSO on 630 meters between Washington State and New Zealand!]

— 73 and Happy Holidays, Rich, W2VU

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