



Second Century

IARU Restructuring

In April, ARRL President Rick Roderick, K5UR; International Affairs Vice President Rod Stafford, W6ROD, and I traveled to Paris to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU). It was 1925 when ARRL Founding President Hiram Percy Maxim, W1AW, traveled to Paris to lead the formation of an international body focused on spectrum use and spectrum defense, building on the challenges his young organization faced in the United States. As we took in the presentations, the Eiffel Tower loomed large in the background, illustrating iconic, long-standing strength. IARU Secretary and Past ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, did a masterful job with a team in Paris, creating that historic celebration.

The conversation at that event was dominated by a proposal IARU has been circulating about a restructuring of the organization. Today, IARU is divided into three regions. Region 1 is Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Northern Asia; Region 2 is the Americas, and Region 3 is Asia-Pacific. ARRL represents members in both Region 2 and Region 3 (US Pacific territories and Minor Outlying Islands). ARRL also serves as International Secretariat (IS) of IARU, and has for the life of the organization. Over the past 100 years, no other organization within IARU has stepped forward to serve as IS — a role that carries both significant responsibility and financial commitment. ARRL is proud to continue our leadership role as IS.

The proposed restructuring to an international assembly dismantles the regional structure of IARU. This has serious implications, especially with regard to voting. ARRL would have its voting power diminished to that of any tiny island state with just a handful of members. Another key provision is the elimination of the role of International Secretariat. The leadership that ARRL takes as IS to ensure that a collaborative process to select and elect IARU officials, especially the Secretary, which is voted on by the ARRL Board of Directors, would go away. It would also not provide ARRL or any of the other large societies a permanent seat on the new Executive Committee to ensure that IARU continues to function or is properly funded. It is easy to see that this restructuring will need to be modified or completely rewritten within the coming few years, given its approach.

ARRL's position is that IARU needs to stick to its mission: working with the International Telecommunication Union, representing amateur radio at the World Radiocommunication Conference meetings (WRC, held every 3 – 4 years), and working with Regional Telecommunication Organizations. What appears to be a desire to recreate ARRL for Europe in the aggregate

through IARU should be rethought. IARU faces the very same existential threat that amateur radio does in the United States: the aging out of extremely talented and dedicated volunteers to lead clubs, organizations, and efforts in the regulatory space. So, what to do?

ARRL would like to see IARU abandon its efforts to restructure the organization and its focus on trying to expand or continue to support efforts around the world that fall outside its primary mission. IARU needs to develop training and development programs for emerging amateur radio licensed industry professionals in order to establish the next generation of volunteers to represent amateur radio with regulators — around the world.

What can you do as an ARRL member? Be radio active! Be a member! Be a volunteer! Help create the next generation of amateur radio leaders in your part of the hobby. Be a connector! Where you see smart, experienced leaders in your amateur radio life, ask them to consider volunteering for leadership roles in ARRL or IARU. See you at the Huntsville Hamfest this month.

David A. Minster, NA2AA
Chief Executive Officer