

HOW TO INTERACT WITH YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS AND ALERT THEM TO THE GROWING BPL THREAT AGAINST AMATEUR RADIO

To start with, remember this key point: Keep it Simple!

As you can probably imagine in just your own interactions with friends, coworkers and neighbors, trying to describe the intricacies of Amateur Radio can sometimes be a challenge. When you hear "Yagi" you think "antenna." On the other hand, most people probably think of a cartoon bear robbing picnic baskets. Technical equipment and operating issues that are the everyday norm for a ham may never register on the radar screen of a Member of Congress or their staff. Remember that whenever you speak with elected officials or their staff, you are serving as an ambassador of Amateur Radio. These people will be looking to you for guidance on ham radio issues as much as you will be looking to them for their support. Be patient in serving as a resource.

Although there is no legislation pending before Congress on BPL, Members of Congress can still contact the FCC and express their concerns about BPL and its interference potentials. However, they will not do this unless there is a recognized need emanating from their constituents.

At this point, BPL is not a very "hot" issue on Capitol Hill. Outside of a handful of people who work directly with Telecommunications related Committees and Subcommittees, most Members of Congress and staff are probably not even aware of what BPL is. When writing or speaking with Members of Congress and their staff, you will likely need to describe some background as to what BPL is and why it is a problem for amateur radio. Think basics.

Also, remember that the ARRL website (www.arrl.org) offers an excellent array of resources and information on BPL if you are not sure of some specifics or are looking for additional points to raise. The accompanying paper, "Why is the ARRL Concerned About the FCC's NPRM on BPL?" may be helpful.

WRITING LETTERS AND EMAILS TO YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

- *Remember to include an address:*

The most important, yet often most overlooked, aspect of a written correspondence to a Member of Congress (especially e-mails!) is including a mailing address. Without this incredibly important piece of information, their Member of Congress, or more likely his staff, will immediately stop reading and file it in the trash bin. With so many contrived and mass mailings these days, legislative staff only has time to address letters and e-mails that are certain to have come from their district.

- *Make sure you send your correspondence to the right person:*

When sending a letter to a Member of Congress, be sure it is to the person that represents you. Contacting a Member who does not represent you may be a bigger waste of time than failing to include an address.

If you are unsure of whom your Members of Congress is refer to the search options on the following websites: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov. Each site includes complete contact information for every Representative and Senator.

- *Be brief, but not too brief:*

Try to explain the BPL issue early in the correspondence. Alert them to the fact that there is a pending Notice of Proposed Rulemaking before the FCC on this issue and their attention to the matter in a timely manner is needed. Take a few sentences to describe the problems that BPL causes and how it impacts amateur radio. Describe the important role amateurs play in emergency communications as well. Most importantly, ask your Member of Congress to contact the FCC with concerns about BPL's interference potential.

- *Include credentials and let them know you are an ARRL member:*

Be sure they tell the Member of Congress that you have been licensed by the federal government as an Amateur Radio operator. It will add some additional credibility to any technical aspects you may bring up in the letter. There is no need to provide an extensive resume of all of your Amateur Radio activities, such as your Extra Class license and ARES activities. Remember--be brief. Also, be sure to mention that you are a member of the ARRL. It is important for Members of Congress to know that you are part of a larger group that has an interest in the issue.

CALLING YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Whom to speak with:

Speaking directly with a legislator may not be feasible, especially if you do not have a prior personal relationship with him or her. Making a phone call to their office can be an important first step, however.

Explain that you are a constituent and that you would like to speak with the staff person that handles telecommunications issues.

Make sure you are ready to talk:

Some people get a little stage fright when put on the spot. Staff has very limited time, even for constituents, to focus on an issue. Tell them who you are and that you are a constituent and licensed amateur and that you are calling with concerns regarding the FCC's Proposed Notice of Rulemaking on Broadband over Power Lines. Give them a brief overview of the situation (you may want to have a few notes of important points concerning BPL in front of you) and the implications its deployment has on amateur radio and other public safety communications technology.

Ask that they look into the matter and offer to fax or email them a written follow up on your concerns over BPL. Also ask again that their boss (the Congressman or Senator) support your request to contact the FCC with concerns about BPL deployment and its affects on amateur radio and public safety communications.

Don't be discouraged:

If you are unable to speak with the staff person, leave a message. Staff are extremely busy and you should not feel offended in the least. Give the staff person a few days to return the call. If you don't hear back, try again. Use your best judgment in deciding when too many messages are enough.

PERSONAL VISITS WITH YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Keep Leadership Informed:

Before making an appointment let your Division Director, Vice Director or Section Manager know your intentions. A meeting may already be in place for your Representative or Senator which you could attend. If one isn't, you may be asked to take the lead. Also, you do not want to inundate your elected officials with too many meetings on the same issue, it may become overkill.

Make an appointment in advance:

Call your Senator or Representative's office and ask his or her staff about the possibility of setting up a meeting. Let them know that you would like to discuss BPL, and signal to them that you will keep the meeting brief. Be patient and open to scheduling an appointment several weeks in advance.

Participants:

You should certainly feel comfortable meeting on your own; however, if it would make the situation more relaxed, arrange to bring one or two other amateurs from the state or district to the meeting. Avoid walking in with a large group; it may be distracting. One or two people should be sufficient to deliver your message.

Have a plan:

In advance, know who will speak and how you will approach the legislator. You should be brief but concise in your issue. Having a handout with some key bullet points will help the legislator focus and understand the issue. Members of Congress and their staff are usually inundated with material that is hard to follow and never gets read. Do not offer something that will not be useful. Make your material stand out. If you need some assistance in developing a handout, contact ARRL Headquarters for assistance. Try to keep the meeting focused as well. Legislators are very busy and will appreciate a well-timed meeting.

Get an answer before you leave:

At the conclusion of your meeting, ask your legislator if they will support amateur radio operators on this issue. Also ask if they will send a letter to the FCC expressing concern over BPL deployment.

KEEP THE ARRL INFORMED

Whenever you make a contact with a Member of Congress or their staff, be sure to keep the ARRL informed. Any response or feedback you receive, please pass this information along to your [Division Director](#), [Vice Director](#), or [Section Manager](#). Relaying responses will help the Washington Team develop a more precise agenda as to who needs to be contacted and targeted for opposing BPL. You should also copy your letters and emails that you send to Congress to your Division and Section leadership so the ARRL can ensure that the correct staff receives your correspondences in a timely manner and can follow up.

Contacting the White House

Any communication with the White House should say right up front that you oppose Mr. Bush's encouragement of broadband over power lines in the April 26 speech in Minneapolis. Then say why: there are several broadband technologies, and BPL is the only one that causes severe interference to radio communication.

Emails can be sent directly to the White House using president@whitehouse.gov or the online form that is available at: <https://sawho14.eop.gov/PERSdata/intro.htm>.

Telephone calls can be made to either: (202) 456-1111 (comments) or (202) 456-1414 (switchboard). Be ready to give a very short, concise statement. The operators are very good -- they will tally the calls.

Letters and Emails to Congress

The easiest and most common way to communicate with Congress is through letters and E-mails. Many people question whether there is a difference between a letter and an e-mail to a Member of Congress. The answer is no and yes. Both are treated equally as they come into the office. Postal mail is opened, scanned to identify an issue and then forwarded to the appropriate legislative staff. E-mails move through in a similar manner. The difference comes in timeliness. Due to security procedures, an e-mail may arrive at its intended recipient a bit quicker.

Draft letters for your [Senators](#) and [Congressman](#) are available. The following guide includes keys to a well-constructed correspondence to a member of Congress.

One final thought on letters and e-mails. Members of Congress are impressed by large volumes of mail from their constituents on a particular issue. They are decidedly not impressed by 300 copies of the identical letter, however. If you decide to use the draft letters, please personalize them in some way.

Phone Calls

It may be useful to telephone each of your Senators' offices as well as your Representative. You can follow the guide below.

Personal Meetings

One of the best ways to make a meaningful and lasting impact with your Member of Congress is to meet with them personally. Your congressional representatives likely spend at least a few weekends back in the state and district each month. During certain parts of the year, Members of Congress have an extended opportunity to work out of their home (state and district) offices. Unlike "meet and greets" during your family trips to Washington, DC, this is a real opportunity to get some quality face time with your elected officials. A well-orchestrated personal meeting can set the tone for all future interactions of amateurs when they contact the Representative or Senator.

Key Targets

Pay special attention to the Senators and Representatives on the following list. They serve on key telecom subcommittees of jurisdiction. If you determine that any of these Members of Congress represent you, please make note of it with your friends and urge that they pay special attention to contacting them.

House Telecommunications Subcommittee

- Rep. [Joe Barton \(R-TX\)](#), Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
- Rep. [Fred Upton \(R-MI\)](#), Chairman
House Telecommunications Subcommittee
- Rep. [John D. Dingell \(D-MI\)](#), Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
- Rep. [Edward J. Markey \(D-MA\)](#), Ranking Member
Telecommunications Subcommittee
- Rep. [Michael Bilirakis \(R-FL\)](#)
- Rep. [Cliff Stearns \(R-FL\)](#)
- Rep. [Paul E. Gillmor \(R-OH\)](#)
- Rep. [Christopher Cox \(R-CA\)](#)
- Rep. [Nathan Deal \(R-GA\)](#)
- Rep. [Ed Whitfield \(R-KY\)](#)
- Rep. [Barbara Cubin \(R-WY\)](#)
- Rep. [John Shimkus \(R-IL\)](#)
- Rep. [Heather Wilson \(R-NM\)](#)
- Rep. [Charles "Chip" Pickering \(R-MS\)](#)
- Rep. [Vito Fossella \(R-NY\)](#)
- Rep. [Charles F. Bass \(R-NH\)](#)
- Rep. [Mary Bono \(R-CA\)](#)
- Rep. [Greg Walden, W7EQI \(R-OR\)](#)
- Rep. [Lee Terry \(R-NE\)](#)
- Rep. [Bobby L. Rush \(D-IL\)](#)
- Rep. [Karen McCarthy \(D-MO\)](#)
- Rep. [Michael F. Doyle \(D-PA\)](#)
- Rep. [Jim Davis \(D-FL\)](#)
- Rep. [Rick Boucher \(D-VA\)](#)
- Rep. [Edolphus Towns \(D-NY\)](#)
- Rep. [Bart Gordon \(D-TN\)](#)

- Rep. [Peter Deutsch \(D-FL\)](#)
- Rep. [Anna G. Eshoo \(D-CA\)](#)
- Rep. [Bart Stupak \(D-MI\)](#)
- Rep. [Eliot L. Engel \(D-NY\)](#)
- Rep. [Albert R. Wynn \(D-MD\)](#)
- Rep. [Gene Green \(D-TX\)](#)

Senate Communications Subcommittee

- Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), Chairman
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
- Sen. [Conrad Burns \(R-MT\), Chairman](#)
Senate Communications Subcommittee
- Sen. [Ernest Hollings \(D-SC\) Ranking Member](#)
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
Senate Communications Subcommittee
- Sen. [Ted Stevens \(R-AK\)](#)
- Sen. [Trent Lott \(R-MS\)](#)
- Sen. [Kay Bailey Hutchison \(R-TX\)](#)
- Sen. [Olympia J. Snowe \(R-ME\)](#)
- Sen. [Sam Brownback \(R-KS\)](#)
- Sen. [Gordon Smith \(R-OR\)](#)
- Sen. [Peter G. Fitzgerald \(R-IL\)](#)
- Sen. [John Ensign \(R-NV\)](#)
- Sen. [George Allen \(R-VA\)](#)
- Sen. [John Sununu \(R-NH\)](#)
- Sen. [Daniel K. Inouye \(D-HI\)](#)

- Sen. [John D. Rockefeller \(D-WV\)](#)
- Sen. [John F. Kerry \(D-MA\)](#)
- Sen. [John Breaux \(D-LA\)](#)
- Sen. [Byron Dorgan \(D-ND\)](#)
- Sen. [Ron Wyden \(D-OR\)](#)
- Sen. [Barbara Boxer \(D-CA\)](#)
- Sen. [Bill Nelson \(D-FL\)](#)
- Sen. [Maria Cantwell \(D-WA\)](#)

FCC Commissioner Statements about BPL Interference

When the FCC released the Report and Order announcing the new rules restricting BPL and its interference, most of the Commissioners offered statements about the importance of addressing interference effectively.

[Commissioner Michael J Copps](#): "I remain concerned with the question of interference to amateur radio users. I take the concerns of this community very seriously, and believe that the FCC has an obligation to work hard to monitor, investigate, and take quick action where appropriate to resolve harmful interference. If interference occurs, we must have a system in place to resolve it immediately. If an amateur radio user makes a complaint and an agreement between the BPL provider and the amateur radio user cannot be reached, the FCC should step in and resolve the matter. These cases must not take years to resolve."

[Commissioner Jonathan S Adelstein](#): "I take seriously our obligation under Section 157 of the Communications Act that 'it shall be the policy of the United States to encourage the provision of new technologies and services to the public.' I am fully committed to that mission to promote new technologies, and to provide a framework for innovation so they can succeed. In order to do so in this case, though, we must ensure that sufficient protections are in place to limit interference concerns."

"Recent Access BPL test deployments have been very useful in developing techniques to address interference issues. It is clear that some Access BPL systems can co-exist very well with existing licensees in the HF and VHF bands. In the limited cases of increased interference, the Access BPL operators were able to quickly resolve and address the interference problem. Other Access BPL systems, though, have not fared so well, and these systems should not be deployed on a commercial basis if they will continue to result in harmful interference."

"We have put in place on Access BPL some special rules that are not normally required of Part 15 operators. However, I believe that these restrictions and requirements, such as adaptive frequency selection, remote shut down control, and a publicly available Access BPL database, are critical to providing an operational environment that safeguards existing licensees from harmful interference. I am also pleased to support our specific requirement for Access BPL providers to promptly respond to complaints of harmful interference from public safety licensees."

[Commissioner Kathleen Q Abernathy](#): "We believe the new requirements we are imposing will help minimize harmful interference that may occur and, to the extent any harmful interference does occur, to quickly resolve any issues."

[Commissioner Kevin J Martin](#): "In this Order, we have attempted to facilitate deployment of BPL while ensuring that existing users are protected from harmful interference. Working closely with NTIA, we have taken strides to address interference concerns of both Government and private users. Nevertheless, I recognize that Amateur radio operators still have concerns that they will experience interference from BPL systems. In addition, broadcasters are concerned that BPL systems will cause interference in the low VHF band. I take these concerns - as well as the other concerns expressed about BPL systems causing interference - very seriously. I am confident that the Commission will continue to monitor these concerns and will take steps, where needed, to address interference problems going forward."