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ARLB011 ARRL Executive Committee Issues Mobile Amateur Radio
Operation Policy Statement

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To all radio amateurs

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ARLB011 ARRL Executive Committee Issues Mobile Amateur Radio
Operation Policy Statement

On January 30, at the instruction of the Board of Directors at its January 2009 meeting, the ARRL Executive Committee adopted a policy statement on mobile Amateur Radio operations. The statement addresses the growing number of proposed state and local laws and ordinances regulating the use of cellular telephone and text messaging, inadvertently affecting Amateur Radio mobile communications.

In its statement, the Executive Committee urges state and municipal legislators to limit the scope of their proposals, limiting them to devices such as full duplex wireless telephones and related hand-held or portable equipment. Alternately, it suggests that licensed Amateur Radio operation be listed specifically as an exclusion to the proposed regulations.

"At the start of each new session, you see a flurry of this type of proposal in state legislatures across the country," said ARRL Regulatory Information Manager Dan Henderson, N1ND.

As of February 1, 2009, Henderson said that the ARRL is aware of proposals in 11 states: Georgia, Hawaii Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Montana, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Wyoming, as well as several local city or town proposals.

"These proposals are usually intended to regulate cellular telephone and text messaging by drivers as a matter of safety but, when they are written in very broad terms, can include Amateur Radio mobile operations in the 'net' they cast," Henderson continued. "The Executive Committee's policy statement gives a good, concise background of the role the Amateur Service plays in public safety and service communications. It also highlights the differences between communications conducted by cellular telephone and those using Amateur Radio. Finally, the statement offers some suggested statutory language for state motor vehicle codes which would protect Amateur Radio mobile operation."

The ARRL recognizes that driver inattention is a leading cause of automobile accidents. The policy statement raises the fact that cell phones utilize full duplex communications -- where the user is talking and listening simultaneously. The Executive Committee statement says "Two-way radio use is dissimilar from full-duplex cellular telephone communications because the operator spends little time actually transmitting; the time spent listening is more similar to, and arguably less distracting than listening to a broadcast radio, CD or MP3 player. There are no distinctions to be made between or among Amateur Radio, public safety land mobile, private land mobile or citizen's radio in terms of driver distraction. All

are distinguishable from mobile cellular telephone communications in this respect."

The ARRL Policy Statement also recognizes the responsibility of the amateur community to conduct its activities in a manner that does not create unsafe operation of their motor vehicle. "Safety has to be a top concern at all times," Henderson concluded.

The ARRL Policy Statement can be found on the web at,
<http://www.arrl.org/govrelations/MobileAmateurRadioPolicyStatement.pdf>.

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