



ARRL Tennessee Section Newsletter – August 2026

Beginning this issue, we will utilize hyperlinks in our newsletter rather than print the URL web address. Whenever you see a colored underlined text, clicking on it will take you straight to the website or email address. This will make for easier reading and ease of use. Thanks for your understanding! – Sky/KO4DKI

From Our Section Manager:

Hello TN Section ARRL members.

The hot and humid days of August are a good reason to stay inside with the AC cranked up and spend some time on the air. While there's always plenty of contests, operating events, nets, and rag-chewing to participate in, we have a new event just for the state of Tennessee.



The "Volunteer State Worked-All-Counties" is a year-long operating event to promote on-the-air activity among Tennessee amateurs. There are multiple awards that can be earned, with the ultimate goal being contact with all 95 Tennessee counties. This is a great way to get to know your fellow amateur radio operators from across the state. Check out the details in this issue of the ARRL TN Section newsletter that are right below this article.

While most hamfests in the section tend to be in the spring, we have lots of great events coming up in August and September. While not in the TN Section, the Huntsville Hamfest (August 22-23) is always a favorite. The Lakeway Hamfest in Dandridge is coming up on September 12, W4DXCC by SEDCO will be in Pigeon Forge on September 19, and the Middle TN Ham Co-Op event is on September 26. I'm looking forward to seeing you at these events.

You might want to go ahead and mark September 6 on your calendar for the Tennessee QSO Party. [The Tennessee QSO Party](#) is an annual event where operators in the great state of Tennessee are encouraged to participate as

antennas around the world rotate and point to the volunteer state. The Tennessee QSO Party is hosted by the Tennessee Contest Group. Each year tens of thousands of QSOs occur between Tennessee amateur radio operators and hams worldwide. Plaques are awarded for category winners.

73,

David/KM4NYI

*David Thomas / KM4NYI
Section Manager
ARRL Tennessee Section*

Volunteer State Worked All Counties Award (VSWAC)

The purpose of this award is to encourage amateur radio operators to get on the air and make contacts with other Tennessee stations. This is not a contest - but rather an “operating event” that will offer recognition of amateur radio operators who contact all Tennessee counties.

This event period is from August 1, 2026, until August 1, 2027.

1. The object of this event is to make contact in all counties in the state of Tennessee from within the county you live in. If you live outside of the state of Tennessee, you must operate within your home county.
2. Whenever possible, make the contact outside of your home station.
3. Only use phone or CW modes; digital or automatic contacts will be rejected. This is in place simply to encourage operators to get to know other amateurs by have a meaningful QSO.
4. To encourage the use of all normally accessible bands by offering more points for contacts in certain bands.
5. The point system is designed to encourage Technicians class licensees and newly licensed amateurs to explore all frequency bands and modes available for their use.
6. This event promotes learning about the state of Tennessee by getting to know the counties that lie within its borders.
7. All contacts must be logged (electronically or on paper) and include the station worked, name of operator, county name, date, time, frequency, and mode. Paper QSL cards are acceptable.

Scoring Philosophy - Unlike traditional contests where every county is worth the same amount, the VSWAC recognizes that some Tennessee counties are significantly harder to work because of geography, population density, amateur radio activity, and propagation challenges.

Each county is assigned a **County Difficulty Value (CDV)**. The final score for a contact is determined by multiplying the county value by the band/mode multiplier.

Basic Scoring Formula

County Difficulty Value × Band/Mode Multiplier = Contact Score

Example:

- Clay County (100 points) worked on 2m CW (×20)
- Score = 100 × 20
- **2,000 points**

Tennessee County Difficulty Values

100-Point Counties (Rare Counties)

Clay	Hancock	Houston	Lake
Moore	Perry	Pickett	Van Buren

75-Point Counties

Benton	Bledsoe	Cannon	Chester
Crockett	Decatur	Grundy	Haywood
Humphreys	Jackson	Johnson	Lewis
Meigs	Polk	Sequatchie	Stewart
Trousdale	Unicoi	Wayne	

50-Point Counties

Campbell	Carroll	Cheatham	Claiborne
Cocke	Dyer	Fayette	Fentress
Franklin	Giles	Grainger	Hardeman
Hardin	Henderson	Henry	Hickman
Lauderdale	Lawrence	Lincoln	Macon
Marion	Marshall	McNairy	Monroe
Morgan	Obion	Overton	Rhea
Scott	Smith	Union	Warren
Weakley	White		

40-Point Counties

Anderson	Bedford	Coffee	Cumberland
Dickson	Gibson	Greene	Hamblen
Hawkins	Jefferson	Loudon	McMinn
Putnam	Roane	Robertson	Tipton

30-Point Counties

Blount	Bradley	Madison	Maury
Montgomery	Sevier	Sullivan	Sumner
Washington	Wilson		

20-Point Counties

Hamilton	Rutherford	Williamson
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10-Point Counties

Davidson	Knox	Shelby
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Band & Mode Multipliers

Band	Voice	CW
160m	x3	x4
80m	x2	x3
40m	x2	x3
20m	x3	x4
17m	x4	x5
15m	x4	x5

Band	Voice	CW
12m	x5	x6
10m	x5	x6
6m	x7	x15
2m Simplex	x10	x20
220 Simplex	x15	x25
440 Simplex	x20	x25

Sample Scores:

Davidson County on 40m SSB

$10 \times 2 = 20$ points

Hancock County on 40m CW

$100 \times 4 = 400$ points

Van Buren County on 6m CW

$100 \times 15 = 1,500$ points

Clay County on 222 MHz FM Simplex

$100 \times 15 = 1,500$ points

Pickett County on 70cm CW Simplex

$100 \times 25 = 2,500$ points

Grand Division Certificates

These awards are given out for participants "on their way" to the Worked All Counties award. Grand Division Certificates are sent as a printable PDF file via e-mail.

East Tennessee: Complete all 33 East Tennessee counties.

Middle Tennessee: Complete all 41 Middle Tennessee counties.

West Tennessee: Complete all 21 West Tennessee counties.

Portable & Power Multipliers (Applied to the final score):

Category	Multiplier
Fixed Station	$\times 1.0$
Outdoor Portable	$\times 1.25$
Battery/Solar Only	$\times 1.25$
Outdoor Portable + Battery/Solar	$\times 1.5$
QRP ($\leq 5W$ CW / $\leq 10W$ Voice)	Additional $\times 1.25$

The "Volunteer State Grand Slam"

The contest's highest achievement:

- Operate entirely from one home county.
- Complete contacts with all 95 Tennessee counties.
- At least 25% of contacts made outdoors.
- At least two contacts on VHF or higher (50 MC and above)
- At least one contact on CW and one on Phone

AWARDS

Anyone contacting all 95 Tennessee counties will earn the VSWAC certificate. ARRL members will receive a printed certificate via US Mail; non ARRL members will receive an award certificate via e-mail as a printable PDF file. All licensed amateur radio operators are eligible to participate.

Amateur radio clubs within the Tennessee Section may participate operating under their club call sign.

At the conclusion of the contest period, awards will be given to the top 5 operators with the highest point score.

Grand Division Certificates will be issued as earned via e-mail as a printable PDF file.

All operators earning an award will be listed in the ARRL Tennessee Section Newsletter and on the TNARRL.ORG website.

Special Exception: If a county has no registered amateur radio operator living there, a rover or portable operator who operates from that county with the sole purpose of activating the county will automatically be credited for “a contact” to that county.



**Fire Up the Rigs:
The 2026 Tennessee QSO Party
Is Almost Here!**

September 6, 2026

It's time to double-check your antennas, fine-tune your logging setups, and get ready for one of the most exciting operating events on our annual calendar: the [2026 Tennessee QSO Party \(TNQP\)](#)! Hosted by the Tennessee Contest Group, this year's event takes place on **Sunday, September 6, 2026**, running from **1:00 PM to 11:00 PM EDT (1700Z to 0300Z)**.

Whether you operate from a permanent home shack, set up a portable field station, or hit the highway as a mobile rover, TNQP offers ten hours of fast-paced operating and a fantastic chance to represent the Volunteer State on the airwaves.

Event At-A-Glance

- **Date & Time:** Sunday, September 6, 2026 | 1700Z – 0300Z (1:00 PM – 11:00 PM EDT)
- **Bands:** All HF bands (excluding WARC bands: 30m, 17m, 12m)

- **Modes:** CW, Phone (SSB), and Digital (any digital mode that supports the exchange format; excludes FT-4/8)
- **Exchange:**
 - **Tennessee Stations:** Signal Report (RS/T) + 3-Letter County Abbreviation
 - **Out-of-State / DX Stations:** Signal Report (RS/T) + State, Canadian Province, or DXCC Country

Why You Should Get on the Air

1. **Be the Hunted:** For thousands of operators across North America and around the globe, Tennessee stations are in high demand. When you call CQ TNQP, expect steady pileups as hunters try to work all 95 Tennessee counties.
2. **Team Up for Multi-Op:** Tennessee participants can group together to enter as a **Multi-Operator** station. Teaming up with local club members or fellow testers is a fantastic way to keep your station operating full-time for all ten hours without operator fatigue, while making the event a social, high-scoring effort.
3. **Double Dip with POTA:** Planning to operate portable? The party is a prime opportunity to activate a **Parks on the Air (POTA)** unit in TN while giving out rare county multipliers. You can work callers hunting the state contest and hunters chasing your park designation all in one outing!
4. **Flexible Operations:** You don't need a massive competitive contesting setup to make an impact. Single-operator, multi-operator, low-power, QRP, and mobile categories mean there's an operating style for everyone.

Tips for Success

- **Check Your Logging Software:** Ensure your logger software is updated with the latest master country files (wl_cty.dat) and the correct TNQP module.
- **Plan Your Strategy:** If you plan to work multiple bands or digital modes alongside CW and SSB, coordinate your CAT control and interface settings ahead of time to minimize downtime on contest day.
- **Submit Your Logs:** Don't let your contacts go uncounted! Electronic log submissions in Cabrillo format are due shortly after the event via the official TNQP log submission portal.

Mark your calendar, test your station gear this week, and let's put Tennessee on the map. See you on the air!

For full rules, county abbreviation lists, and log upload details, visit the [official website](#).

73 de AC6ZM

Future Tennessee Hamfest Dates:

9/12	East Tennessee Hamfest. - Dandridge, TN
9/19	W4DXCC by SEDCO - Pigeon Forge, TN.
9/26	Middle Tennessee Co-op Event - Greenbrier, TN.
10/16-17	Chattanooga Hamfest October 16 -17, Catoosa County Colonnade
10/17	Short Mountain Repeater Club Hamfest - Wartrace, TN.

Dates of other hamfests can be found [at the ARRL site](#).

The Convention and Hamfest Calendar that runs in *QST* each month also presents information about upcoming events.

If your club is wanting to host a convention, hamfest, tailgate, or swapfest, please consider applying for it to be an ARRL-sanctioned event. To learn what it means to be an ARRL sanctioned event, and to get some ideas on how to plan for and conduct a hamfest or convention, visit [here](#) for a planner and all the rules. To have your event sanctioned, complete the online application [here](#).

From the Tennessee Section Traffic Manager

The most recent "ARRL Tennessee Section Newsletter - June 2026" provided a discussion about the Tennessee Phone Net and the significant role that the Phone Net plays in Message Traffic handling. I mentioned that we have many net control stations (NCS) that manage the Phone Net. We also have ham operator participants checking in from almost, if not all 95 Tennessee counties. We discussed having conducted training to educate and/or improve Tennessee's ham operators' abilities to pass message traffic within and outside of Tennessee.

This month, we recognize another group of devoted hams in the state of Tennessee, The TN CW Net which complements the mission of the Phone Net. In the worst of times, conditions, and emergencies, this group of operators can play a major role in Tennessee to get messages through. CW is more intelligible under low signal to noise (i.e. "weak signal") conditions than SSB signals, even using phonetics.

CURRENT TN CW Net Times and Frequency

The TN CW Net operates Monday through Friday nights at 0000Z (7:00 P.M. CST / 8:00 P.M. EST) except for holidays all year long (DST change) on 3.562 MHz (occasional shifts to avoid QRM). This frequency allows all operators from Technician Class (*allowed CW privileges 3.525 MHz to 3.600 MHz*) through Extra Class to participate. Bruce Smith,

AC4G is our TN CW Net manager and Bob McGraw, K4TAX, Assistant TN CW Net Manager invite you to be a part of the “dits” and “DAHs” on 3.562 MHz every weekday evening by participating in the TN CW Net.

TN CW Net Involvement

Bruce/AC4G, the TN CW Net Manger, notes that Wayne/W4TZB has [provided a web page](#) with information to help ham operators listen to, understand the net procedures, and hopefully check into the TN CW Net. His web page provides tips about learning and improving Morse Code skills and *how to listen to the net even if you do not know Morse Code*. Wayne’s page includes ARRL Q-Signals for CW Net use; a list of CW abbreviations; and more information to aid any ham wanting to learn and operate using Morse Code. The information on Wayne’s web page should help any ham willing to learn Morse Code to participate in any CW Net. Wayne likes to say, *“If you don’t know Morse Code then you don’t know ‘Dit’.”*

Crisp & Technical

The net begins with (click to listen): [“DAH-DAH-di-DAH”; “di-di-dit”; and “DAH”](#).

This is the familiar **“QST”**, the universal *“Calling All Radio Amateurs”* Q-Signal sent by the Net Control Station (NCS) is a ritual that links today’s operators with those who first built CW’s reputation for reliability. The opening call of “QST” is more than a signal — it’s a handshake across time, connecting generations of Morse code enthusiasts.

Brief TN CW Net History

The Tennessee CW Net was active in the 1950’s with both the Tennessee HIGH Speed CW Net and the Tennessee SLOW Speed CW Net. While there have been many Net Control Stations (NCS) over the years, Cactus/K4YMB is to be commended for almost single-handedly keeping the net operating during the 1990s by serving as NCS several nights each week. Today, we have a new line-up of dedicated NCS operators who proudly continue the tradition.

Bob, K4TAX who was licensed in 1959 states that, “the Net was active then”. AC4G remembers the first signals he sent via Morse Code to check-in to the TN Slow Speed Net back in 1978 as a student at Tennessee Tech University sending and receiving Morse code at approximately 7 WPM as a Novice Licensee. Wayne, W4TZB, licensed in 1951 recalls his father driving him to hand-deliver radiograms since Wayne was not yet old enough to drive. Not everyone in those days had a telephone, and Long-distance telephone calls were considered relatively expensive, and many radiograms had significant content about travel, health, welfare, births, deaths, etc.

Some operators were sending faster than 20 words per minute (WPM), but there was also a Tennessee Slow Speed Net which averaged around 5 to 10 WPM, and for a while, one night per week was designated Slow Speed. In about 2006, both nets were combined. Today, the TN CW Net handles all levels of Morse Code speeds to allow any ham to check-in to the net. Each NCS adjusts their speed to accommodate the speed of any CW operator, so you are welcome to QNI (check into net) at any speed. Today the **National Traffic System** (NTS) has many CW operators across the USA who continue relay radiograms from station to station in a manner similar to that which the American Radio RELAY League used when it was founded in 1914 by Hiram Percy Maxim, who found that messages could be sent more reliably over long distances if relay stations were organized. It was a radio version of the Pony Express with each station a new rider.

73/WD4LAR/Harrell

Harrell Davidson, WD4LAR
Tennessee Section Traffic Manager
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2026 ARRL America250 Worked All States Calling all Hams!

A Year-Long Worked-All-States Operating Event Celebrating the 250th Anniversary (Sesquicentennial) of the signing of the Declaration of Independence is going on right

now. TN is looking for activators for this fun event. In similar fashion to the 2014 ARRL Centennial Celebration, and the 2018 International Grid Chase, and 2023 Volunteer's On The Air events, this event will be exclusively driven only by QSOs uploaded to Logbook of The World (LOTW).

The America250-WAS begins as a Basic Worked All States Award by contacting all 50 States in 2026.

Endorsements Available:

- Contacting W1AW/Portable stations in all 50 States.
- Contacting ARRL Affiliated Club Call Signs in all 50 States.
- Contacting all 50 States on CW and Phone and Digital for a 'TRIPLE PLAY'.

Tennessee Section – W1AW/4 Activation

Catherine Goodrich/W4CMG, will once again be asking clubs to sign up for multiple shifts on assigned dates. The specific times, bands and modes within the requested shifts will be assigned as we get closer to the event and will be communicated very soon! If your club would like to activate as a W1AW/4 station, please contact any of the following to schedule a time slot - we hope your club will join in on the fun!!

DATE	DAY	SCHEDULERS
9/16/2026	Wednesday	Matt Nicholas/KG4LIO & Chuck Talley/KJ4KVC
9/17/2026	Thursday	Tom Vickers/N4TV & Tom Bridgewater/NA8X
9/18/2026	Friday	Dale Darling/W9WBA & Dudley Pitts/KM4IYQ
9/19/2026	Saturday	David Thomas/KM4NYI & Cathy Goodrich/W4CMG
9/20/2026	Sunday	Jim Snyder/AJ4NO (Coordinating TN ARES members)
9/21/2026	Monday	Sky McCracken/KO4DKI



The Monroe County ARES/MCARES and The Cherokee Ultra Endurance Race

[The Cherokee Ultra](#). It's not just a test of runners' stamina; it is a test of amateur radio operators from across Southeast Tennessee. The event began in 2024 when the race team approached [Monroe County ARES](#) asking us to provide communications for three sites along the course. The course is roughly 40 miles through rugged and remote wilderness trails from Tellico Plains, TN to Reliance, TN. There is little to no cell coverage along the route and much of the course is miles from blacktop, much less civilization. It began as a 70k race that ran from Reliance to Tellico and a 130k that ran from Tellico to Reliance and back.



[Monroe County ARES \(MCARES\)](#) stepped up to the task the first year and provided radio coverage of the turnaround point, the middle point of the course and the start finish line where Net Control was stationed. During the inaugural run, there was a broken leg a little over 3 miles into the 70k. MCARES was able to facilitate getting this information to emergency services in both

Monroe and Polk Counties and keep the race directors abreast of changes in the incident. This solidified the need for amateur radio for this race not only in 2024, but every year to come.

Fast forward to 2025. We had been asked to provide radio coverage of all 10 aid stations and checkpoints for the duration of the event. That's 27 hours of radio coverage and lots of volunteers needed. We reached out to our neighboring county ARES groups and clubs for help, and we were able to provide full coverage of the race. No major incidents were dealt with in 2025. MCARES did implement APRS into the operations that year. Sounds simple, but much of the course has zero regular APRS coverage. A temporary digipeater was needed to make sure the route was covered and accessible by all radio operators. It was a massive success!

Now to this year. We were once again asked to provide coverage for all the aid stations for the duration of the event. It is not easy to get that many volunteers and get a schedule that works for all involved, but we made it happen. The Cherokee Ultra falls on the same weekend as the annual McMinn County Hamfest. That also makes it tough to fill the volunteer roster. One of the volunteers went to (and worked) the hamfest before coming to volunteer for the overnight shift on the Ultra. That's dedication! Not to mention the folks that camped at their assigned spots for the whole weekend!

Did I mention that the race added a third course for 2026? Now we not only had the 130k and 70k, but also a 20+ mile out and back to the top of Waucheesi Mountain. Some of the radio volunteers saw over 200 runners, many in large groups that had to be sorted through and relayed to Net Control with their bib numbers and time out of each station. That's a lot of information to gather and relay accurately.

We utilized APRS again this year. We rely heavily on APRS messaging between stations to pass this large amount of data. This not only keeps chatter down on the repeater that we use for voice, but it also builds an almost instant log of everything that gets submitted. This log is visible for 14 days and is accessible by anyone with a link to aprs.fi and an internet connection. Runners' family members, race directors, amateurs listening from home and even the curious scanner listeners can follow right along with what is happening in near real time by reading the iGated messages from their favorite web browser. Here is a sample of the over 1000 APRS messages that were sent during the 2026 Cherokee Ultra.

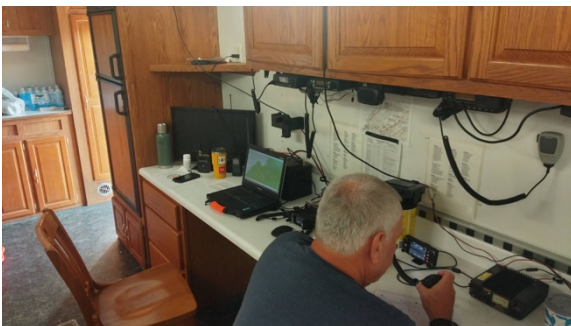
2026-07-18 14:13:15 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): 120, 162, 151 DROP at BUCK
2026-07-18 14:14:04 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): 21 (1st M) out COKER. 21 advises trail marker issues near BUCK
2026-07-18 14:14:24 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #9 & 11 14:13
2026-07-18 14:15:14 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #13 & 24 14:14
2026-07-18 14:15:26 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): race team request 4 LARGE bags ice at SMITHFIELD
2026-07-18 14:16:01 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #42 14:15
2026-07-18 14:16:18 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): COKER needs ICE
2026-07-18 14:16:59 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #151 Drop
2026-07-18 14:17:09 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #139 Drop
2026-07-18 14:17:36 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #120 Drop
2026-07-18 14:18:19 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #146 14:17
2026-07-18 14:20:51 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #162 Drop

2026-07-18 14:21:34 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): 25, 107, 10, 3, 181 out UNICOI 13:58-14:10
 2026-07-18 14:21:53 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #41 14:21
 2026-07-18 14:22:34 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): 171, 169, 128, 106, 40 out UNICOI 14:12
 2026-07-18 14:23:06 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #28 14:22
 2026-07-18 14:23:39 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): 38 out COKER
 2026-07-18 14:25:28 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): UNICOI request update on cups and request more Ginger Ale
 2026-07-18 14:26:17 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): COKER also request Ginger Ale and more Cokes
 2026-07-18 14:27:52 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #16 14:27
 2026-07-18 14:31:43 EDT: [KQ4QCJ-1](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): 172, 239, 209, 220 out FURNACE
 2026-07-18 14:33:45 EDT: [KM4KMO-10](#)>[KQ4QCJ-1](#): Buck Bald #2 14:31

Lots of lessons were learned again this year and will be implemented into the after-action report once it is finalized. We identified strong points and weak points to work on in the future, but most of all, everyone had a blast! The Cherokee Ultra is a challenging event for all who are involved. If you like to challenge yourself and your equipment, I highly encourage you to volunteer as one of the checkpoint radio operators. The event will most likely be the 3rd weekend of July 2027. You can also send an email to the Monroe County ARES EC at ec@mcacares.net to be sure you get added to the list for next year.

I can't talk about this event without giving a shoutout to the amazing group of radio folks that make it all possible. Along with Monroe County ARES, we also had members of Loudon County ARES and Tellico Lake Amateur Radio Club, Blount County ARES, Smoky Mountain Amateur Radio Club, Roane County ARES, McMinn County Amateur Radio Club, "The Mountain Toppers", Radio Amateur Club of Knoxville, METERS Inc., Cleveland Amateur Radio Club, Bradley County ACS, and others that I am sure I have forgotten.

Pictured below is the Net Control Station inside the Monroe County Sheriff's Department trailer. Lee/KQ4BJU is in dark grey, Mike/ KK6OKU is in light grey, and Matt/KQ4THA is in black, working the APRS and voice stations at the Net Control trailer.



[Run East Coast Adventures on Facebook](#) and Instagram have more pictures and videos of the actual race, and you might find a shot or two of the amazing amateurs that kept everybody accounted for.

Feel free to reach out to me for more information about the event. I am still working on the after action and we have another smaller event this weekend... on top of a full-time job! (ha!) July is busy in Monroe County!

73 and God bless,

Caleb/KQ4QCJ

Caleb Lynn, KQ4QCJ
Emergency Coordinator

[Monroe County Amateur Radio Emergency Service](#)

Opinion: ARRL Needs New Blood. Really

by Fred Hopengarten/K1VR, Past Director, New England Division

[note: the opinions here are the author's and not of the editor or the Tennessee Section of the ARRL]

The ARRL does a lot of good work. It fights for spectrum. It helps organize public service. It supports education and licensing. You should be a member. You should support the League.

And yet: membership is shrinking, the mood is frayed, and the organization could use a little oxygen. Maybe a lot of oxygen.

This year, four Division Directors may seek reelection: K0AIZ in the Midwest, N8SY in the Great Lakes, AC0W in Dakota, and K5UZ in Delta. They may be fine fellows. They may be good operators, decent DXers, repeater builders, public-service regulars, or all the above. Good for them. But that is not the job. Directors are not hired to be pleasant at dinner. They are there to make decisions that strengthen the League and amateur radio.

On that score, I think these four have backed the wrong plays.

A League That Likes the Curtain. Start with secrecy. In the old days, any Board member could ask for a roll-call vote. That changed. Now a recorded vote requires a motion, a second, and five directors willing to say yes.

Maybe that sounds tidy. Maybe it sounds efficient. It is neither especially tidy nor especially efficient. A roll call takes less than a minute. What the new rule really does is make it harder to see who voted for what.

That matters, because some of the most important motions are the least glamorous ones: dues, governance, and League positions on public issues. If members want to know how their directors voted, they should not need a treasure map.

K0AIZ, N8SY, AC0W, and K5UZ all supported that change.

Campaigning, But Make It Tiny. Then there's the election rule that says campaigning and fundraising must stay entirely inside the division holding the election. No outside support. No GoFundMe. No help from a friend, a club, or a brother in another division. That is a strange way to encourage competition.

Think about the math. If a division has 10,000 members, even a modest mailing gets expensive fast. A challenger is supposed to build a campaign, spread the word, and overcome the built-in advantages of incumbency — but only with one hand tied behind the back.

It starts to feel less like election reform and more like incumbency insurance.

Residency, Or Else. There is also the residency rule: a candidate must live full-time in the division. Not just be based there. Not just keep a foothold there. Full-time.

That sounds neat until you imagine real life. People own cabins. People snowbird. People split time between places. People travel. People have jobs, family, and call signs that do not always fit into a clean little box.

But under this rule, a vacation place outside the division can become disqualifying. A fishing cabin can become a scandal. A winter house can become a problem. It is hard not to wonder whether this is really about eligibility or merely about protecting the people already inside the tent.

Don't Mention the Other Guy. One of the more remarkable rules says a candidate may not make any comments, direct or indirect, about an opponent in campaign communications.

That is a campaign rule that somehow dislikes campaigns. By that logic, challengers are supposed to run without contrast, without comparison, and without saying why the incumbent should be replaced. In other words: please compete, but gently, and never in a way that causes a voter to notice there is an incumbent at all.

That is not healthy democracy. That is upholstery.

No Real Megaphone. The communications restrictions are just as odd. Candidates may not use communications vehicles that carry campaigning outside their division, except for personal websites or webpages.

Meanwhile, incumbents have the League's machinery, the visibility of their office, and the ability to email members in ways challengers cannot match. Think of it as a League halo. That is not a level field. It is a tilted one.

And the burden is not theoretical. Email lists are not handed to challengers. Postal mail is expensive. Club networks are restricted. Large national clubs can become unusable for campaign outreach. If you are trying to run against an incumbent, the system seems designed to make sure your message arrives late, thin, or not at all.

The Bigger Problem. The deeper issue is not any one rule. It is the accumulation of rules that make challenge harder, scrutiny weaker, and change less likely.

ARRL membership has been declining for years. The League needs fresh thinking, not procedural armor. It needs directors who ask whether a rule grows the organization, broadens participation, and encourages competition. It does not need a governing style that treats every awkward question like a threat.

Ask these directors what they have done to reverse the decline. Ask whether they voted for the rules that narrow debate, limit fundraising, and shield incumbents. Ask whether that is really the best way to rebuild trust. Because if the answer is “we made it harder for challengers to compete,” that is not a reform. That is a warning label.

What To Do. The good news is that small elections can still matter a lot. In the Great Lakes Division in 2023, N8SY defeated W8CI by only 152 votes out of 4,198 cast. In Midwest, Dakota, and Delta, there were no challengers at all.

That should not happen.

We need candidates in the Midwest, Great Lakes, Dakota, and Delta Divisions. We need energetic, eligible, forward-looking hams who want to serve, not just occupy a seat. Public service people. POTA people. SOTA people. Digital folks. Builders. Volunteers. People who care about growth. So here is the ask: find one good candidate in your division. Encourage that candidate. Provide support. Help them run. Make sure you are an ARRL member. And when the ballot comes, use it.

Because the League does not need fewer challenges to prevailing thought. It needs more.

Fred Hopengarten/K1VR has written one book for the ARRL and another for the Society of Broadcast Engineers. He is a frequent speaker for Amateur Radio clubs across New England and the United States and is the lead manager and presenter for the “Amateur Radio and the Law” forum at the Dayton Hamvention.

Do You Have Newsletter Submissions or Announcements?

If you, your club, or your Section-related organization ever has any news, announcements, or pictures, please send them to me!!

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Public Information Coordinator
ARRL Tennessee Section*

West Tennessee Affiliated Club Links

[Clarksville Amateur Transmitting Society](#) - Clarksville, TN
[Decatur County Amateur Radio Club](#) - Decaturville, TN
[Delta Amateur Radio Club](#) - Memphis, TN
[Dickson County Amateur Club](#) - Dickson, TN
[Hardin & McNairy Amateur Radio Club](#) - Savannah, TN
[Hickman County Skywarn Association](#) - Lyles, TN
[Leading Edge Wireless](#)
[Marshall County Amateur Radio Society](#) - Lewisburg, TN
[Maury Amateur Radio Club](#) - Columbia, TN
[Memphis Digital Amateur Radio Club](#) - Memphis, TN
[Mid-South Amateur Radio Association](#) - Bartlett, TN
[Nashoba Amateur Radio Club](#) - Germantown, TN
[Nashville Amateur Radio Club](#) - Nashville, TN
[Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club](#) - Union City, TN
[Robertson County Amateur Radio Club](#) - Springfield, TN
[Tipton Amateur Radio Society](#) - Atoka, TN
[Three Rivers Amateur Radio Society](#) - McEwan, TN
[Vanderbilt Univ Radio Club](#) - Nashville, TN
[West Tennessee Amateur Radio Society](#) - Jackson, TN

East Tennessee Affiliated Club Links

[American Legion Amateur Radio Club](#) - Sevierville, TN
[Andrew Johnson Amateur Radio Club](#) - Greenville, TN
[Amateur Radio Club of the University of TN](#) - Knoxville, TN
[Big South Fork Amateur Radio Club](#) - Huntsville, TN
[Bristol Amateur Radio Club](#) - Bristol, TN
[Campbell County Amateur Radio Club](#) - Jonesboro, TN
[Carter County Amateur Radio Association](#) - Elizabethton, TN
[Chattanooga Amateur Radio Club](#) - Hixson, TN
[Cleveland Amateur Radio Club](#) - Cleveland, TN
[Cumberland Plateau Amateur Radio Club](#) - Crossville, TN
[DeKalb-Cannon County Amateur Radio Club](#) - Smithville, TN
[East Tennessee DX Association](#) - Knoxville, TN
[Hawkins Hancock Amateur Radio Team](#) - Rogersville, TN
[Johnson City Radio Association, Inc.](#) - Jonesborough, TN
[Johnson County Amateur Radio Club](#) - Mountain City, TN
[Kingsport Amateur Radio Club](#) - Kingsport, TN
[Bays Mountain Radio Club](#) - Kingsport, TN
[Lakeway Amateur Radio Club](#) - Talbott, TN
[Lincoln County Amateur Radio Association](#) - Fayetteville, TN
[Macon Area Amateur Radio Society](#) - Lafayette, TN
[Middle Tennessee Amateur Radio Society](#) - Tullahoma, TN
[Middle East Tennessee Emergency Radio SE](#) - Knoxville, TN
[Oak Ridge Amateur Radio Club, Inc.](#) - Oak Ridge, TN
[Off-Grid AuxComm Radio Club](#) - Knoxville, TN
[Plateau Amateur Radio Club](#) - Monroe, TN

[Radio Amateur Radio Club of Knoxville](#) - Knoxville, TN
[Rhea County Amateur Radio Club](#) - Dayton, TN
[Roane County Amateur Radio Club](#) - Kingston, TN
[Sevier County Amateur Radio Society](#) - Sevierville, TN
[Smoky Mountain Amateur Radio Club](#) - Maryville, TN
[Tellico Lake Amateur Radio Club](#) - Lenoir City, TN
[Tennessee Contest Group](#) - Statewide
[Unicoi County Amateur Radio Association](#) - Unicoi, TN
[University of Tennessee Amateur Radio Club](#) - Knoxville, TN
[University Amateur Radio Club](#) - Johnson City, TN
[Wilson Amateur Radio Club](#) - Lebanon, TN

If you see ANY incorrect/outdated information or bad links, please
let me know at ko4dki@gmail.com, and update
your club information on the [official ARRL page](#).