

JOHN ENSIGN
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2805

May 17, 2004

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

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Federal Communications Commission
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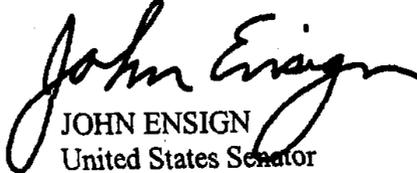
Dear Ms. Atkinson:

I have received the enclosed correspondence from a constituent, Alvin Walker, regarding the implementation of Broadband Power Lines (BPL). Mr. Walker is concerned about the impact BPL will have on amateur radio operations.

Due to the desire of my office to be responsive to all inquiries, your consideration of the enclosed correspondence will be greatly appreciated. Please reply directly to Mr. Walker, and forward a copy of that response to me, marked to the attention of Matthew McCullough in my Washington office.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,


JOHN ENSIGN
United States Senator

JE/jmm

Enclosure

24 MAY 2004 RCVD

No. of Copies rec'd 2
List ABCDE

jawrmmsg.txt
Capitol Correspond
Incoming Email Message

Constituent ID: 141276

Mr. Alvin H. walker
1555 Downs Dr.
Minden, NV 89423

Activity Created: 5/6/04
Activity ID: 157086
Interest Code(s): e-goop,

Incoming Message:

Subject Desc: Government Operations

Date Received: 5/2/2004 10:21:59 PM

May 1, 2004
Senator John Ensign (R- NV)
Washington, DC 20515
Dear Senator John Ensign:

I need your help.

I am very concerned with the proposed use of Broadband over Power Lines (BPL) that is being favorably reviewed by the FCC and President Bush. Please do not this allow this proposal for BPL to go any further!

From the data that I have received about this new electronic transmission of information is that it is wrought with numerous problems that have not been resolved. Several countries in the world have disallowed BPL to be used in their jurisdictions after reviewing studies showing it causes way too much interference with many of their existing communication modes.

Many studies that have been made that show BPL will cause considerable interference to much of the existing amateur radio frequencies as well with emergency and government frequencies. More research must be conducted before allowing this new mode of transmission of data.

As you probably know many amateur radio operators are not Hams only for the hobby and fun of it. Many of them spend considerable time volunteering for community projects and emergency communications, all at their own expense.

I for one volunteer my communication experience and equipment for several events including the annual Pony Express Re-ride across Nevada and the one hundred and twenty-nine mile bicycle Death Ride in Alpine County, California.

I also am a member of the emergency communication team for Douglas County, Nevada which includes membership in the FEMA "Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service" (RACES), American Radio Relay League (ARRL) "Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and hold an ARRL designated "official Emergency Station" (OES) position. We spend many hours a year in communications training so we will be prepared to serve as communicators if a disaster happens. Our group in the past several years have been involved helping various agencies with communications during fires and floods in Nevada and California.

The following is a letter composed by ARRL more completely explaining the reasons for not going ahead with BPL at this time:

lawmsg.txt

On April 26, President Bush told the American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention in Minneapolis: "There needs to be technical standards to make possible new broadband technologies, such as the use of high-speed communication directly over power lines. Power lines were for electricity; power lines can be used for broadband technology. So the technical standards need to be changed to encourage that."

Mr. Bush is wrong. Using power lines to distribute broadband services (called Broadband over Power Lines, or BPL) is a bad idea that should not be encouraged. As a federally licensed Amateur Radio operator who has passed a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) examination in radio communication technology, I can tell you why. Power lines were designed to transmit electrical energy. They were not designed to transmit broadband signals, which in fact are radio-frequency (RF) signals. When a broadband signal is put on a power line, much of the RF energy leaks off the line and radiates, causing interference to nearby radio receivers. Interference has been documented at test sites throughout the country and overseas where BPL is in operation. Recordings of actual interference at several test sites are available at www.arrl.org/bpl.

The nation's 680,000 radio amateurs are especially concerned about this interference because it affects the short waves -- a unique portion of the radio spectrum that supports long-distance, intercontinental radio communication. Licensed radio amateurs use these frequencies for hurricane reporting, disaster and emergency relief, and many other purposes in accordance with FCC regulations. The Amateur Radio Service is the only 100% failsafe emergency communications capability in the world. No matter what happens, radio amateurs will be able to communicate with one another without having to rely on the expensive and vulnerable infrastructure -- but we cannot maintain our emergency networks if BPL is deployed and interferes with the weak radio signals we are trying to hear.

In addition to amateur operation, the short waves are used for international broadcasting, aeronautical, maritime, and other services including the military. Depending on the frequencies in use, BPL interference also could wipe out radio communication for many of our nation's First Responders -- police, fire, and emergency medical personnel -- who use low-band VHF radios operating in the 30-50 megahertz (MHz) range.

Radio amateurs support expanded broadband services to consumers at lower cost. Indeed, they tend to be early adopters of new technology. However, there are ways to deliver broadband that do not pollute the radio spectrum as BPL does. These include fiber-to-the-home, cable, DSL, and Broadband Wireless Access. None of these technologies causes interference to short wave radio.

BPL is sometimes touted as a solution for rural areas. It is not. A BPL signal only carries a few thousand feet down a power line and then must be repeated. This requires a lot of hardware and will not be economic in areas with low population densities.

The FCC recognizes the interference potential of BPL and is in the midst of a rulemaking proceeding, ET Docket No. 04-37, that proposes new requirements and measurement guidelines for BPL systems. However, the FCC proposals do not go nearly far enough to protect over-the-air radiocommunication services.

In short, BPL has a major disadvantage that is not shared by other broadband technologies and that outweighs whatever benefit it may offer. National broadband telecommunications policy should not include support for BPL, but should focus on other, more appropriate technologies.

By encouraging broadband over power lines, the administration is heading in the wrong direction. Please do what you can to change its course. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alvin H. Walker, KD7MXR
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awawnv@aol.com