I support the adoption of RM-10867 as proposed by the ARRL, or better yet a compromise of RM-10867 and RM-10870 that mirrors RM-10867 but includes the complete elimination of the morse code requirement.

The requirement of morse code proficiency is a barrier for otherwise qualified amateur radio operators to advance in the hobby and increase their skills. While there is no doubt that morse code has a useful purpose and should always be encouraged to remain an active part of this hobby, we need to make it optional rather than mandatory.

By making morse code an option instead of a requirement, it does not prevent those who want to learn and use CW from doing so freely.

I have seen comments from individuals who claim morse code is essential to our national security and cite the events of 9/11/01 as proof, and yet I disagree. On the contrary, I believe the morse code requirement is killing amateur radio slowly but surely, and therefore morse code is a danger to the security of our country. Almost every person I have ever talked to about amateur radio has explicitly named morse code as the reason they have not pursued a license. Even though the no-code technician class is available, these persons feel there is no room for advancement in the hobby and feel unwelcomed by seasoned veterans who have discouraged them from pursing a license without learning the code.

I personally was discouraged from getting my first license because of abusive statements by an elderly ham who insulted my integrity because I didn't want to learn morse code. My feeling was that if this was how I would be welcomed by the amateur community, I wanted nothing to do with the hobby. I overcame this discouragement by talking with other amateurs who convinced me it was a worthwhile endeavor, even without learning the code, and I'm glad I did.

When you consider the sheer number of people who don't even consider becoming a ham because of the morse code requirements, we are alienating a huge group of potential enthusiasts, most of whom would be an asset to the hobby.

These same "seasoned veterans" of amateur radio who claim that ending the morse code requirement is an act of evil, are the same amateurs we are slowly watching go silent year after year as the average age of amateur radio operaters increases, and the interest in the hobby by the younger generation is falling.

Eventually the "near 700,000" amateur operators in this country will dwindle to near nothing as the hold outs that are vastly opposed to progress take interest in amateur radio with them to the grave. No one will be left to encourage the hobby, and it too will become extinct.

If there are fewer and fewer people interested in amateur radio because of a silly morse code requirement, that means there are fewer and fewer people involved in emergency communications. It means that when there is a disaster or a terrorist attack, there will be fewer hams out there to help with communication. The fact that all hams know morse code will mean nothing if there are not enough hams around to actually use it.

You may be surprised to find someday that the number of hams who know morse code and use morse code has increased substantially simply because more people are involved with amateur radio, and more people are licensed. Take away the requirement and suddenly morse code is no longer a liability to amateur radio, but rather an admired quality that no-code hams will want to learn purely for the challenge and knowledge. Not because they're forced into it. I hate to use a tired cliche, but you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.

No one can argue that morse code isn't an important part of the amateur radio hobby and emergency communications. But just as RACES events and emergency communications training is NOT a requirement to be a ham, neither should learning morse code. Make it a choice, not a restriction.

The future of the amateur radio community depends on attracting new blood to this hobby.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Seraphin
Rochester, Michigan