

FCC Proposes to Reinstate Amateur Radio Service Fees

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Amateur radio licensees would pay a \$50 fee for each amateur radio license application if the FCC adopts rules it proposed this week. Included in the FCC's fee proposal are applications for new licenses, renewal and upgrades to existing licenses, and vanity call sign requests. Excluded are applications for administrative updates, such as changes of address, and annual regulatory fees.

The FCC proposal is contained in a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)* in MD Docket 20-270, which was adopted to implement portions of the *Repack Airwaves Yielding Better Access for Users of Modern Services Act* of 2018 - the so-called *Ray Baum's Act*.

The Act requires that the FCC switch from a Congressionally-mandated fee structure to a cost-based system of assessment. In its *NPRM*, the FCC proposed application fees for a broad range of services that use the FCC's Universal Licensing System (ULS), including the Amateur Radio Service that had been excluded by an earlier statute. The 2018 statute excludes the Amateur Service from annual regulatory fees, but not from application fees.

Applications for personal licenses are mostly automated and do not have individualized staff costs for data input or review, the FCC said in its *NPRM*. For these automated processes - new/major modifications, renewal, and minor modifications - we propose a nominal application fee of \$50 due to automating the processes, routine ULS maintenance, and limited instances where staff input is required.

The same \$50 fee would apply to all Amateur Service applications, including those for vanity call signs. Although there is currently no fee for vanity call signs in the Amateur Radio Service, we find that such applications impose similar costs in aggregate on Commission resources as new applications and therefore propose a \$50 fee, the FCC said.

The FCC is not proposing to charge for administrative updates, such as mailing address changes for amateur applications, and amateur radio will remain exempt from annual regulatory fees. For administrative updates [and] modifications, which also are highly automated, we find that it is in the public interest to encourage licensees to update their [own] information without a charge, the FCC said.

The FCC also proposes to assess a \$50 fee for individuals who want a printed copy of their license. The Commission has proposed to eliminate these services - but to the extent the Commission does not do so, we propose a fee of \$50 to cover the costs of these services, the FCC said.

The Ray Baum's Act does not exempt filing fees in the Amateur Radio Service. The FCC dropped assessment of fees for vanity call signs several years ago.

Deadlines for comments and reply comments will be determined once the *NPRM* appears in the *Federal Register*. When that happens, interested parties may file comments by using the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (**ECFS**), posting to MD Docket No. 20-270. The FCC will consider all filed comments, once the proceeding has been opened to receive them.