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I would like to express my support for SB61: AN ACT EXEMPTING AMATEUR RADIO OPERATORS USING HAND-HELD RADIOS FROM THE PROHIBITION ON USING HAND-HELD MOBILE TELEPHONES AND MOBILE ELECTRONIC DEVICES WHILE DRIVING.

I am the District Emergency Coordinator for the Amateur Radio Emergency Service, Region 3, CT. Our organization utilizes the same map as used by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. In fact, we have Memorandum of Understandings and similar agreements with:

State of CT, Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection
American Red Cross
Salvation Army
National Weather Service/SKYWARN
Various local Community Emergency Response Teams
Various hospitals
Various charities including The Jim Calhoun Cancer Challenge and Angelride (amongst others).

As you can see by the groups we work with, we provide a valuable public service. I have almost 170 volunteers in my region alone, and several thousand amateurs willing to help if needed during emergencies and public service.

Because of the nature of the services we provide, we use two way radios. Whether we are transmitting weather observations to the National Weather Service, transmitting information to a hospital on behalf of our state, staffing shelters or providing emergency and routine communications for non-profit charities – our radios are the key to the services we provide.

Two way radio doesn't belong in the same category as cell phones. Unlike cell phones, our communication are half-duplex. Meaning simply, we can only talk or listen at any given time, but not both at the same time (like a telephone conversation). In actuality, we actually listen over 99 percent of the time and only talk when we have relevant information to provide to those groups we serve.

Furthermore, I feel the language of the bill may need clarification. Amateur radios aren't just "hand held" (like a "walkie talkie") as mentioned in this bill. Amateur radios can be mobile radios (installed in a vehicle), similar to those used by law enforcement and public sector employees. As such, I feel we need clarification that simply exempts amateur radio, not the type of radio being used.

I applaud the legislature for bringing up this issue and helping us clarify the difference between amateur radio and cell phone use. This bill would prevent the possibility of an amateur radio operator from infraction and/or fine while providing the services we offer to our communities.