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FCC CHAIRMAN MICHAEL POWELL ANNOUNCES CREATION OF FCC DIGITAL TELEVISION TASK FORCE

Washington, D.C. - FCC Chairman Michael Powell today announced the creation of an FCC Digital Television (DTV) Task Force to review the ongoing transition to DTV, and to make recommendations to the Commission concerning priorities to facilitate the transition and promote the rapid recovery of broadcast spectrum for other uses.

Powell said the Task Force will be a cross-bureau and cross-disciplinary group. It will be chaired by Mass Media Bureau Associate Chief, Rick Chessen.

Powell said, "The DTV transition is a massive and complex undertaking. Although I'm often asked what the FCC is going to do to 'fix' the DTV transition, I believe that a big part of the problem were the unrealistic expectations set by the 2006 target date for return of the analog spectrum. This Task Force will help us re-examine the assumptions on which the Commission based its DTV policies, and give us the ability to react and make necessary adjustments."

The Chairman added, "The second job of the Task Force will be to help us set priorities as we move forward – what we need to do immediately, what can wait, what need not be done at all, and what is more appropriately done by someone else because it involves aspects of the transition not within the purview or expertise of the FCC."

Powell cautioned that the Commission must review the DTV transition in light of "new realities that have arisen out of the tragic events of September 11." He said, "We must be aware of the financial impact of the attacks on our media companies. We must be aware of the impact on consumer spending. We must be aware of the needs of public safety and other wireless services for additional spectrum. Above all, we must be mindful of our place in the broader community."

Powell said, "This is a Task Force born of the need to take a hard look at where we are in the DTV transition and to make any mid-course corrections necessary. The group we've assembled is well-suited to handle these challenges before us."