

## SEPARATE STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS

*Re: In the Matter of Review of the Commission's Rules and Policies Affecting the Conversion To Digital Television, MB Docket No.00-39*

This second item of the day reiterates the commitment of this Commission to accelerate the country's transition to digital television. I support the item because I believe it is a necessary step toward realizing our statutory obligations with regard to DTV.

Let me say at the outset that I am altogether aware of the concern that has been expressed over the initial impact a DTV tuner requirement could have on consumer prices. Far from turning a blind eye to valid consumer concerns by supporting this item, I believe that the action that we take today will make DTV sets affordable for all consumers more quickly than would be possible without today's Commission action. History indicates, and some of the major manufacturers agree, that the costs of incorporating DTV tuners into televisions set should fall fairly rapidly as **all** sets include these tuners. In addition, the five year phase-in schedule does not require the smallest and least expensive sets to include tuners until 2007, by which time the cost of this technology will no doubt be dramatically reduced. So the phased-in requirement we adopt today, rather than increasing the costs of sets, should significantly reduce the costs of DTV technology, which we hope and expect will ameliorate what might otherwise be significant consumer "sticker shock." Additionally, those of us who purchase new sets between now and 2007 won't have to go out right after 2007, when these relatively new receivers are still performing well, and buy another set in order to receive digital programming. That would be sticker shock, too.

There is no question that DTV is the wave of the future: Congress has mandated the return of analog spectrum and the transition to digital broadcasting; this Commission and its Chairman are committed to moving the transition forward; and there are already some 400 stations across the country broadcasting digital signals. But the high price and scarcity of DTV-capable receivers that are on the market now are not consistent with realizing the Congressional goal of transitioning to digital television at such time as 85% of homes have digital reception capability. Each time a consumer purchases an analog-only set, we move further from reaching that 85% and further away from the Congressional objective.

The acknowledgement by some manufacturers that a DTV tuner phase-in requirement such as the one established in the Order is reasonable and doable is a great boon to our efforts here. In addition, the rolling phase-in requirement provides manufacturers with the flexibility to reach the goal post on a faster schedule. Although manufacturers will not be **required** to fully complete the phase-in until 2007, there is nothing to prevent them from taking advantage of manufacturing, technological, or other advances that might arise over the course of the schedule that would allow manufacturers to incorporate DTV tuners into more sets sooner.

The bottom line is that we must get the DTV transition back on track. I believe this *Order* is a good step in the right direction.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that this *Order* is by no means the end of the process. With some 70% of U.S. households subscribing to cable television services, we must quickly address cable compatibility issues for the digital transition to succeed. Ideally a solution on those issues would track the time-frames established in today's *Order*. Consumers deserve, and must have, that kind of certainty. I understand that, from a technical standpoint, this may be a bit farther from resolution than the digital broadcast tuner. But I hope the players can speed up their progress on the cable compatibility issues, and I look forward to working with my colleagues, the industry, and all interested stakeholders to resolve those problems as soon as possible.