



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC Media Bureau Issues Report to Congress on Over-the-Air Viewers

Washington, DC – As Congress considers a date certain to end the transition to digital television, the Federal Communications Commission’s Media Bureau issued a report yesterday detailing the Bureau’s analysis of comments on the current status of over-the-air (OTA) broadcast television viewers in the United States, and a range of potential options for assisting those OTA viewers when analog broadcast service is terminated.

Congress has already declared its support for ending the transition to digital through their vote on a Sense of the Senate in the 108th Congress. The report seeks to further this debate by summarizing data received in response to a Public Notice issued by the Media Bureau in May 2004, and providing independent analysis.

The report provides analysis on several aspects of the transition to digital broadcasting including:

- The timing and nature of a switchover (e.g., the possible consequences of a simultaneous end to analog broadcasting versus a ‘fade to black’ option, which would phase out analog broadcasting in a particular market over time),
- Cost of digital-to-analog converter boxes for OTA viewers and the probability of a significant drop in expense for this equipment as the transition progresses,
- Reasons why OTA viewers do not subscribe to a multi-channel video provider (MVPD). One survey found that the percentage of U.S. households that do not subscribe to a MVPD due to a “lack of funds” is 30% of OTA viewers or only 4.5% of total television households.

While the report contains no specific recommendations, it describes in detail the consequences of various approaches to ending the transition and the potential trade-offs involved for consumers and industry alike.

The report is available at www.fcc.gov/mb.