

REMARKS OF COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
FCC's Digital Television Workshop
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Thank you for participating in our workshop this morning.

This is just the type of event we need – and a lot more like it – to help jump start transition planning, and get us all on the same page. I thank Chairman Martin for his leadership in pulling this together. And special thanks to Cathy Siedel and the entire staff of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau for all the work they are doing to help Americans experience a painless transition.

The FCC and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) have a joint responsibility to ensure a smooth and seamless transition. Its successes and shortcomings will be shared throughout the federal government, but the FCC and NTIA have a special role to play. So whether we have a formal working relationship in the form of a task force – as I have proposed – or we continue to talk in a more casual, ad-hoc basis, NTIA and the FCC are responsible for the effectiveness of the DTV transition.

If we succeed, the American people's gratitude will come in the form of silence – where nobody really notices the end of analog broadcasting and we all continue to enjoy our favorite shows without a glitch.

On the other hand, if we do not, people's frustration can come as a tidal wave of complaints to Capitol Hill, the FCC, NTIA, the local broadcast station or cable operator – from over-the-air viewers, cable subscribers with TVs not connected to cable, the elderly, disabled and low income communities, to people in rural and tribal lands.

I am prepared to offer my services to help in any way I can to coordinate industry, government and consumer group efforts in a "public-private partnership." I feel strongly about the issue, and I am committed to providing any support you need.

In the most recent study released by Association of Public TV Stations, more Americans know of the DTV transition than they did last November. Still, over half of the American people – 51 percent – do not know about the transition. Not great, but better than last year's 61 percent. The study found that the federal government has not convinced the public about the benefits of DTV. It concluded we need to devote more resources to make the case.

Events like the one here today and yesterday at NTIA are important. But we need to go out to America rather than expect America to come to us in Washington, DC. We need to take this message far outside the Beltway.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has said the transition lacks focus and leadership. I still think we can turn that around. And many of the industry participants here

today have filled the void and have attempted to coordinate their respective activities and messages. We need to be vetting and giving input as these activities and messages roll out.

There are still gaps. At the Senate Aging Committee hearing, GAO was concerned, as was Senator Claire McCaskill, we need a coherent message. We need to get the messages coordinated to maximize their effectiveness. It is like an ad campaign. For it to sink in, we need to hit a simple message over and over again. Yes, we need to target different groups differently, but confused messaging can only undercut our ability to break through.

I believe the FCC and NTIA have a greater role to play. And by most accounts, we seem to be trying to do just that. It is not too late. With 510 days before the deadline there is plenty of work to do. I believe, we can – and must – do it.

I am pleased that NTIA has advanced the ball and has certified the first “digital-to-analog converter” box. And there is more to come.

Couple of days ago, I saw RCA’s converter box. I was impressed by its relatively simple installation process; its universal remote with big buttons that is perfect for seniors; its convenient single-button closed-caption functionality that is responsive to the concerns of those with disabilities; and its bilingual message on the packaging.

It turns out something as simple as a single-action closed-caption button was the product of government bringing the concerns of disability advocates to the consumer electronic community. That is public/private partnership at work. That is the kind of referee role I believe government can serve throughout this transition.

So, with the FCC and NTIA coordinating these two public events yesterday and today, I hope that this is just the beginning of a more coordinated working relationship.

Thank you all for participating and putting so much worthwhile effort into this event today.