

**Remarks of Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
At FCC DTV Consumer Education Workshop
September 26, 2007**

(As Prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon. I certainly don't have to tell any of you what an historic date February 17, 2009 is. I don't have to tell you that it represents anticipated and probably some unimagined challenges and changes for industry, government, and private citizens. And I don't have to tell you that this is truly the greatest technological television advancement since the advent of color tv. But I do have to tell American consumers. In fact, we all do!

The most important factor in ensuring a smooth transition is consumer education. Approximately half of all American households that have televisions still have analog-only sets. One article I read says we just tend to keep our old televisions—some homes have up to 11—which adds to the challenges we are here to discuss. It is important that these consumers can continue not only to receive their favorite entertainment shows, but vital news and emergency information as well.

I appreciate all that Secretary Kneur and his staff at NTIA are doing to ensure a smooth transition by administering the set-top box coupon program that will allow analog consumers to continue receiving broadcast signals after the digital transition. The coupon program is a **massive** undertaking, and I appreciate NTIA's efforts to ensure that analog households are not left in the dark.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to visit NTIA and see these much talked about boxes up close and personal. I was impressed not only by how well they work, but how light-weight, compact, and portable they are. I truly believe this will make the digital transition more consumer-friendly. As you are aware, the FCC and our Consumer Bureau is also working hand-in-hand with NTIA, as well as those of you gathered who represent industry, retailers, and consumer groups, to ensure a seamless transition. At last month's open meeting we required cable operators to carry both analog and digital signals for at least three years after the DTV transition. And earlier we also began requiring retailers to label televisions that will not receive digital signals. Let me be clear, we are already sending investigators out and will be enforcing stiff monetary penalties for those retailers that fail to comply.

The Consumer Electronics Retailer Coalition has been meeting with the FCC and developing specific plans for assisting their customers, such as additional training for sales associates, store signage, inclusion of information on retailers' websites, and coordination with NTIA to ensure that every coupon is honored.

At the FCC, we are continuing to examine other technical issues, such as channel placement and the transition time required for broadcasters to end analog signals and begin transmitting digital signals. As one broadcaster told me recently, it's like trying to change an airplane's engine mid-flight. Just because the parts are on the shelf doesn't mean you can drop them in place and keep going. And, having recently been atop the Empire State Building and seen the complexity of the antenna installation there, I realize that this will all take time and there are many highly-technical issues that

must be resolved so that the transition accomplishes the goals it was meant to fulfill—more efficient use of spectrum and the development of new devices and services.

The FCC, NTIA, and many of you here today are responding to the calls of Congress for leaders to step forward and take action. Through educational events like this one, and technological solutions like the converter box program, we will have America prepared for this revolutionary event.

In just 510 days, Americans will be waking up to a whole new age in television history. We hope that day will be just like any other Wednesday.

Thank you again and I look forward to working with you all for the next 510 days.