

Remarks of Chairman Kevin J. Martin
Digital Television Consumer Education Workshop Focusing on Seniors
FCC Headquarters
Washington, DC
November 8, 2007

I would like to thank all of you for coming here today to the Commission's second workshop focused on the digital television transition. Today's workshop, like the ones that will soon follow, is about how we can best reach those consumers that may be most affected by the digital transition. Our specific focus today is exploring ways in which we can effectively educate senior citizens about the upcoming transition.

In the upcoming months we will explore how we can target other communities that are disproportionately impacted by the transition and likely to be least aware of it. These communities include the disabled, low-income earners, those living in rural areas, and minorities and non-English speakers.

The Commission's highest priority is protecting the American consumer. We intend to take whatever actions are necessary to minimize the potential burden the digital transition could impose on consumers and maximize their ability to benefit from it.

We have been using several means of ensuring that senior citizens are aware of the transition and understand what steps they need to take in order to continue watching television when analog broadcasting ends.

For example, by using our field offices throughout the country, we have disseminated DTV materials to over 1800 senior centers, senior organizations, and community groups in 36 states. We have held approximately 130 DTV Awareness Sessions throughout the country and have more planned. With respect to the news media, we have worked closely with a variety of outlets to disseminate information about the transition through television, radio, and print. For example, I recently did an interview about the transition on AARP radio and was interviewed by AARP's magazine for its upcoming issue that will feature a story on the digital transition. And, earlier this week, I did a Public Service Announcement (PSA) with Retirement Living TV which targets its programming to seniors and reaches nearly 30 million homes nationwide. Finally, we have developed partnerships with numerous consumer groups and federal and state agencies that are focused on the needs of senior citizens.

In addition to educating seniors about the upcoming transition, we are using our enforcement authority to protect them. Specifically, we have devoted significant resources to enforcing our labeling requirements which require retailers to place a warning near analog televisions informing consumers that these sets may not work after February 17, 2009 without a converter box. We plan to work closely with the NTIA and the FTC to mitigate potential scams that may target the elderly once the coupon program is initiated. The Commission is committed to investigating, or assisting other law

enforcement agencies in investigating, opportunistic individuals or companies preying on unsuspecting seniors and other vulnerable customers. We will use the same resolve in this area as we have demonstrated in enforcing our labeling requirements.

Despite the fact that we have been busy working to educate senior citizens about the transition, I recognize that our efforts alone will fall short. This is why it is so important that we talk to all of you today. We need to work together to reach the greatest percentage possible of the elderly community. A successful completion of the digital transition depends upon government and industry working together to promote consumer awareness and minimize the burdens borne by consumers.

I know that all of us in this room are united in a single goal - protecting consumers by ensuring they are aware of and prepared for the digital transition. I look forward to hearing your concerns, ideas and thoughts about how we can best work together to make sure all Americans benefit from the digital revolution. I hope that this workshop is a productive one that allows us to strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones.

Thanks to all of you for participating in our conference today.