

**Remarks of Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
To FCC Consumer Advisory Committee
April 4, 2008**

Good Morning.

Welcome to the FCC. I am a government official who feels that the government cannot and should not do everything for every citizen. However, this is a situation where government involvement is appropriate, as this is about consumers knowing about the DTV transition and being prepared. There are certain segments of our society that deserve our special attention- seniors, the elderly, those with disabilities, and even those that just need a little bit more help. The government, nonprofits, and certainly our partners in the private sector are assisting in our efforts, to keep citizens connected to the world, to the news, and to the information they need.

I want to thank each of you for your service to the Commission, and to tell you how valuable your work has been to us. Your thirty-plus page comments on the Consumer Education Initiative NPRM were most instructive.

I am pleased that you have again convened to discuss what we all agree is one of the FCC's top priorities—the DTV transition. As you are certainly aware, the transition will occur in just 319 days! Like so many revolutionary changes, the success of this transition depends on preparation, coordination, and commitment. And the best place to start is with what you are doing today—education.

In addition, as you will further discuss later this morning, the FCC's DTV Task Force, has conducted several forums to target specific segments of the population most

at risk during the DTV transition—from seniors, to non-English-speakers, to individuals with disabilities—and earlier this week a workshop focused on low-income communities. I hope that this targeted approach to outreach and education will help us achieve our goal of a seamless transition in which every American wakes up to find February 17, 2009 a day like any other. Again, that's only 319 days away!

Approximately half of all American households still have analog-only television sets. If they aren't in the living room, they may be in a guest room or the basement. I know the Tates have certainly moved TV sets from one room to another over the years! In fact, half of all American homes have three or more sets. It is important that we educate viewers on the need to prepare every set in their home for the upcoming transition.

These are major portions of our society that depend on over-the-air broadcasts for their weather, sports, politics, community events, and most importantly, emergency alerts. We cannot leave them in the dark, which is why your involvement is so critical. We must make educational materials available to them; we must hold seminars in their communities, not just here in Washington, to explain the steps they need to take to be ready; and we must continue to remind them how soon this change is coming.

The DTV Task Force is working to prepare those with disabilities by making our educational materials available in Braille, large print, and audio formats. Captioned video for people with hearing disabilities will soon be available. Additionally, in an effort to reach every citizen, in every corner of the country, we have produced

educational materials in eleven languages. We are sending teams around the country to cities big and small, and I am personally speaking about the transition everywhere I go.

The DTV Transition is not just about providing Americans with incredibly brilliant video, increased pixels and crystal-clear sound. When the transition is complete, spectrum will be available for a variety of new uses— such as mobile video, additional platforms for broadband deployment, and most importantly, finally attaining true interoperability between our public safety officials in times of crisis. Because of the 700 MHz band’s excellent propagation characteristics, some have referred to this as “beachfront” property, and with winning bids totaling almost \$19 billion, it is obviously quite valuable.

Of course, DTV is not the only issue facing us as regulators or consumers. Another top priority is the continued deployment of broadband to every corner of America. In the U.S., we have opted for a platform-neutral, “light regulatory touch” for broadband service, whether provided across cable systems, telephone lines, power lines, or wireless platforms. This helps ensure a level playing field among competing providers, no matter the technology or business model. A light regulatory touch promotes vigorous competition, and led to a 61% increase in the number of broadband connections by all competing providers in 2006. That’s a total of 82.5 million lines.

In 2007, spending on broadband networks was estimated to be \$15 billion, and the Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) estimates this figure will rise dramatically, to \$23 billion, in 2010. This huge increase in broadband investment will include additional fiber deployment by cable companies as they expand into HDTV and video-on-demand, deployment by telcos as they expand into advanced broadband and video services such as FiOS, deployment of mobile broadband, and deployment of exciting new fixed wireless services such as WiMax.

Again, thank you for your efforts and your willingness to share your expertise with us.