

**CHAIRMAN KEVIN J. MARTIN STATEMENT REGARDING
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA EARLY TRANSITION**

Thursday, May 8, 2008

**Wilmington, North Carolina.....
“First in Flight, First in Digital”**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for being here today. I would like to give special thanks to Bill Saffo, the Mayor of Wilmington, Connie Majure-Rhett, President and CEO of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce, Meredith Baker, and especially all the Wilmington, North Carolina broadcasters, specifically, Donna Barrett, President and CEO of Southeastern Media Holdings, Inc. (WSFX (FOX)), Andy Combs, Station Manager of WWAY (ABC), Jim Goodman, President and CEO of Capitol Broadcasting (WILM-LP (CBS)), Paul McTear, President and CEO of Raycom Media Inc. (WECT (NBC)) and Colby May, Esq. on behalf of Trinity Broadcasting (W51CW) for participating in this important event today.

Few moments in history have done more to capture the heart of the American spirit than the Wright brothers' momentous first flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on December 17, 1903. Just as the year 1903 became a year for the history books, the year 2008 looks to be another trail-blazing year for the State of North Carolina.

In the same vein of American spirit, I am pleased to announce that Wilmington, North Carolina will be the first market in the country to make the transition to digital television (DTV).

The commercial broadcasters serving the Wilmington television market have agreed to step up to the challenges of premiering the nation's DTV transition. They will all turn off their analog signals at noon on September 8, 2008. Beginning at 12:00pm on September 8, 2008, these local stations, WWAY (ABC), WSFX-TV (FOX), WECT (NBC), WILM-LP (CBS) and W51CW (Trinity Broadcasting), will broadcast only digital signals to their viewers in the five North Carolina counties that comprise this television market.

The DTV transition for the whole country will take place on February 17, 2009, when all full power television stations must turn off their analog signals and broadcast only digital signals. This test market will be an early transition that will give broadcasters and consumers a chance to experience in advance the upcoming DTV transition. This early test will help us minimize potential burdens for viewers and maximize their ability to benefit from it. The Commission is coordinating with local officials and community groups to accelerate and broaden consumer education outreach efforts. The outreach will focus on the special transition date for Wilmington and the steps viewers may need to take to be ready by September.

On March 3, 2008, my colleague, Commissioner Michael Copps, suggested that the Commission engage in real-world experience readying broadcasters and consumers in advance of the upcoming digital transition. Specifically, he suggested test markets that would switch to all-digital service. I commend the Wilmington broadcasters for their pioneer spirit to go first to help the entire country prepare for the final transition to digital. This experience will help us to spot issues that we need to address elsewhere in the country before next February.

The Commission identified Wilmington as one of only a limited number of potential test markets because only all the commercial stations in the market have already completed construction of their DTV channels and are operating at full post-transition power. The Commission will use the test market as an opportunity to work very closely in advance with broadcasters, viewers, cable companies and others who will be affected to anticipate and address any problems. The Commission is also coordinating with NTIA and local retailers to be sure that digital-to-analog converter boxes are readily available in local stores for consumers who rely on over-the-air service and have analog televisions.

The Wilmington PBS station, WUNJ, will continue broadcasting in both analog and digital. One other low power station that has its digital channel assignment will continue broadcasting an analog signal.

I'd like to take a few moments to explain what the FCC plans to contribute to this effort.

First, we are working closely with all the broadcasters in the Wilmington, North Carolina market to ensure that they are technically ready to transition early.

Second, a Wilmington team, comprised of FCC staffers, is poised to be on the ground in every county of the Wilmington, North Carolina DMA starting next week for the months leading up to the transition to educate consumers about this early transition. In addition, others from the Commission plan on traveling several times to Wilmington, North Carolina in the next few weeks, July, and again in August to do public events and promote the transition via the local media.

Third, Ketchum, our outside PR consultant is in the process of developing 15, 30, and 60 second radio and TV PSAs, and outside billboard advertising, specific to the Wilmington market, highlighting the early transition.

Fourth, we are tailoring specific posters and FCC publications for the Wilmington, NC market that we will distribute to local county officials and city government officials, library systems, faith-based organizations, hospitals, sports leagues, senior centers, and other local grass roots and community-based organizations.

Finally, we are already planning to participate in the following local events in the Wilmington, North Carolina area in the near future:

- We'll be onsite at all locally sponsored events where people gather to discuss the DTV transition, and assist interested consumer in applying for the converter box coupon program. For example, the River Front Farmer's Market, or the Blueberry festival in Pender County which is held on June 20 and 21.
- We will be making a presentation at the Wilmington City Council meeting on May 20th.
- We have an exhibit booth space set for the White Lake Water Festival held in Bladen County on May 16, 17, and 18. At this event we will pass out flyers and educate people about the transition, especially the converter box program.

- In Elizabeth Town, we'll have a table onsite at the 30th birthday party celebration for their public library on June 26. At this event FCC staff will pass out flyers, demonstrate the converter box and help people enroll in the converter box coupon program.
- We already have an agreement with the Director of the Senior Center in New Hanover to (1) do a workshop at the Senior Center, (2) attend the May 28 Annual Health & Fitness Fair, and (3) provide literature for the Home Delivered Meals Program which delivers 312 meals a DAY to seniors.
- We are setting up "FCC Town Halls" in each county to discuss in an open format the specifics of the early transition.
- We are working with the retailers with the purpose of hosting "Ask the FCC" sessions at consumer electronics retailers where consumers will go to buy digital equipment, including converter boxes.

The FCC is committed to ensuring that no American in Wilmington, North Carolina is left in the dark. Each of us here today wants to be sure that every consumer in Wilmington, North Carolina continues to receive their programming on September 8th, 2008. I look forward to continuing to work with the local Wilmington broadcasters, the local government in Wilmington, the NTIA, the cable companies, the satellite companies, the retailers, the manufacturers, and the consumer advocacy groups during the coming four months. And I stress that a successful early DTV transition requires the commitment and cooperation of all of us.

Thank you all for your time and please join me in helping to get the word out.

