



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 15, 2008

Christopher A. McLean
Executive Director
Consumer Electronics Retailers Coalition
317 Massachusetts Avenue, NE – Suite 200
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. McLean:

As you know, the deadline for the digital television transition is five months away. Many of your members are playing a crucial role in the transition by participating in the government's coupon program to subsidize the cost of digital-to-analog converter boxes. We appreciate your participation in this program, which is administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). From the inception of the program, we have all hoped that a manufacturer would produce a converter box that would be available for \$40, thus enabling television viewers to purchase a box for no cost other than local sales tax.

Recently EchoStar introduced a digital-to-analog converter box that is eligible for the NTIA coupon, that has the important analog pass-through feature, and that has a manufacturer's suggested price of \$40. EchoStar first announced plans to offer a \$40 box at the Consumer Electronics Show last January, and the arrival of this box has long been anticipated. Unfortunately, now the box is available, but we find that, thus far, none of the mass retailers is carrying the box and they do not plan to carry it. The EchoStar TR40 converter box is currently only available on several websites and by telephone, with an additional shipping charge of nine to twelve dollars. We understand from EchoStar that the box is available from a few very small retail outlets but is not offered for sale by any major retailer. As a consequence, this box, which was anticipated to be essentially free with the coupon, costs consumers more than ten dollars. Just as important, the limited availability makes it difficult for consumers to find and obtain the box.

I am writing this letter to ask CERC, a longtime supporter of the DTV transition, to help address this problem by asking its member retailers, particularly the major retailers, to agree to carry at least one box with the analog pass-through capability that is priced at \$40. This may be the EchoStar box, or any other box that is introduced at the \$40 level. Availability in retailers such as Best Buy, Circuit City, Sears, Wal-Mart and Radio Shack will be helpful for consumers trying to ensure that they don't lose television

service next February. These stores serve their communities in many ways, and this is an important way for CERC and its members to further assist the monumental task of completing the digital transition. Thank you for all of your efforts in facilitating a smooth transition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin J. Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kevin J. Martin