

**Remarks of Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate**  
**DTV Town Hall**  
**Memphis, TN**  
**September 19, 2008**

Most Americans aren't thinking about what they'll be doing on February 17, 2009-- but the Federal Communications Commission is. The Digital Television Transition is fast approaching.

Like so many revolutionary changes, the success of this transition depends on preparation, coordination, and commitment from all segments of society. At the FCC, we are working to ensure that every American continues to receive the news, information, entertainment, and most importantly, emergency alerts that keep them safe. With over 2,200 events already under our belts, the FCC's DTV Task Force continues to hold forums to target specific segments of the population most at risk during the DTV transition—from minorities, to non-English-speakers, to low-income communities, to senior citizens. My fellow Commissioners and I are fanning out across the country, holding town hall meetings to prepare citizens in cities with the highest percentage of over-the-air viewers. That's why I am so excited to be in Memphis at the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change. I am honored to also follow in Dr. Hook's footsteps as he is also a former FCC Commissioner, and I have had the opportunity to work with him and honor him for his leadership in this community and indeed across the entire nation.

I hope our town hall approach and targeted outreach will help us achieve our goal of a seamless transition—so that Memphis residents wake to find February 18, 2009 a day like any other.

**I. Why Are We Going Through the Transition?**

The simple answer is because Congress mandated it in 2006.

There are many other reasons as well:

1. Digital broadcasting will provide movie-quality picture and sound, and allow for multi-casting-- the ability to offer multiple programming streams on the same amount of bandwidth previously required for just one channel. It will make spectrum available for new and innovative wireless devices we haven't even dreamed of. Perhaps the most important reason for the Transition is improved communications between public safety officials in times of crisis, such as a terrorist attack or a natural disaster like Hurricane Ike. Recently, I was in New Orleans and met with the Louisiana Broadcasters Association—a group that knows first-hand the importance of

communications among public safety officials and the need for true interoperability.

## **II. Does This Affect Me?**

First, do you have a digital TV? If you are unsure, you can contact the manufacturer or your local electronics retailer. A good rule of thumb is that any television that was purchased more than 5 years ago, or has a rabbit ear antenna, probably has an analog-only tuner and you will need to act. Second, are you a subscriber to a pay-tv service such as Comcast or DirecTV? If so, then you probably will be fine. Just make sure every analog TV in your home is connected to the service.

## **III. What do I need to do?**

Three options:

1. You can buy a digital TV,
2. Subscribe to cable or satellite services,
3. Or buy a converter box for your old TV.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration has a website set up to explain the coupon program. You are entitled to two (2) \$40 coupons per household to apply towards the purchase of these boxes. To apply for a coupon online, visit [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) and fill out this simple application. I did this the other night for my parents and it only takes about 3 minutes—and then you will receive confirmation and the date your voucher will be mailed. The FCC even has a video on our website that you can watch to see how to hook up the converter box and how to scan for channels in your area.

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can call

**1-888-DTV-2009**. The coupon(s) will arrive in a few weeks and you simply take it to your local retailer, purchase a converter box, and plug it into your analog TV. To find a list of retailers near you, just go to [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) and enter your address.

You'll get a map showing the closest retailers and giving you their addresses. There is also a list of retailers who sell the boxes near you. I mapped the ones right around Univ. of Memphis (see slide). I urge you to call the retailer first and ask if they have boxes in stock. They range in price from about \$40 - \$100 so you may want to check on the price as well.

Millions of Americans are already enjoying the incredible benefits of digital TV—enhanced color and sound, and even additional local channels. However, this is about more than entertainment. The most important objective is to guarantee that you and Americans everywhere remain connected in case of emergencies. Public awareness continues to skyrocket.

Surveys show that up to 90% of the American public is aware of the DTV Transition. This is due in large part to the excellent outreach and education efforts not only of the FCC, but also our many partners. I especially want to thank the National Association of Broadcasters and the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, as well as our Tennessee Broadcasters and Cable companies--who together have donated over \$1 billion in PSAs and outreach to communities. The benefits we stand to reap from the DTV Transition are enormous, and we must ensure they are available to every citizen-- in Memphis and throughout the country.