

**STATEMENT OF ACTING CHAIRMAN MICHAEL COPPS
OPEN COMMISSION MEETING ON THE DTV TRANSITION
JUNE 3, 2009**

Nine days. We're down to single digits. In nine days, full-power analog broadcasting will come to an end in the United States. And it *will* come to an end. Anyone who thinks there's a chance of another delay had better wake up and smell the converter box. This transition *is* taking place on June 12. This is not a drill.

The good news is that we are in considerably better shape now than we were four months ago. We were nowhere near ready for a nationwide transition in February. Had we flipped the switch then, we would have faced a consumer debacle that would have made New Coke look like a stroke of marketing genius.

That is not to say that the transition on June 12 will be problem-free. Far from it. I have said it many, many times over the past two years, but it bears repeating—there will be disruption. There was no way we could accomplish in four short months what should have been done over the past four years. The hard truth is that we waited too long to deploy our maximum effort and, until recently, lacked the inter-governmental cooperation and public-private partnerships necessary to tackle the job effectively.

All that has changed. We won't be able to fix all of the problems that went unaddressed so long, but we can fix a lot of them. And we can make a real difference for consumers. You'll hear about many of these efforts today. Better consumer outreach. Call centers and walk-in centers where consumers can get help from real human beings. Working with groups like AmeriCorps, local fire departments, and others to provide in-home assistance to consumers who need it. Providing accurate information to consumers about signal coverage and antenna issues.

Many of these ideas were hatched in the wake of the "mini-transition" on February 17, the recent nationwide "soft test," and the earlier test markets of Wilmington, North Carolina and Hawaii. Actually, the delay has given us the chance to have something of the phased transition I advocated so long ago. Almost half of all full-power stations will have transitioned before June 12, and we have been trying to learn from each of those experiences and feed those lessons back into the process.

Some of what we are learning makes me uneasy—especially this late in the game. We still seem to be learning, for instance, about how DTV signals propagate and how the VHF and UHF bands propagate differently. This is a perfect example of an issue that could have been, and should have been, identified and tested long ago rather than something we are scrambling to get our arms around days before the switch.

So overall the delay has been worth it—without a doubt. There are the obvious signs of progress—the number of unprepared households continues to drop and the massive coupon backlog has been cleared. Probably more than half of the unprepared

households we had back in early February are prepared today. So while I have no doubt that there will be disruption, we are working every day, all day, to resolve what we can between now and June 12 and in the important days immediately following June 12.

Behind the new systems we have put in place are people. *None* of this could have happened without a true team effort. I want to again thank my two colleagues for all their hard work and outreach and leadership. That's been a great experience for me. Our FCC teams have been just absolutely incredible—I told them the other day this is the best team mobilization effort I've seen in my many years in this town. The next 10-14 days will be the busiest yet for these good folks, but what will get them through is the commitment they've shown since Day One to get this job done as well as it can possibly be done. I also want to thank our friends at NTIA and our other public sector brethren. We couldn't ask for better partners.

And, of course, our industry and private sector colleagues for their hard work. I've been to so many broadcast stations around the country and met with many state associations, and their leadership has been—and will be, now more than ever, in the days ahead—essential to our success. The June 12 transition will be hundreds of *local* market transitions, and local consumers will be looking to local stations for lots of help. I particularly want to commend those stations that have agreed to serve as analog “nightlight” stations in their markets so that consumers who are not prepared for June 12 know where to turn for help—and I want to thank David Donovan of MSTV for his assistance in reaching out to those stations. Other industries, as we'll hear again today, have stepped up, as have consumer, civil rights, labor, church and dozens of other groups. They have given us a breadth of outreach that would have been otherwise impossible to attain. Not to coin a phrase, but it truly takes a village.

It also takes money. And I want to thank Congress and the President for recognizing that fact, and NTIA for sharing some of it with us. I realize that devoting resources on something like this opens us up to second-guessing, almost no matter what happens. The truth is that no one knows for sure what will happen on June 12. We can make our best predictions, but no one knows for sure how much disruption there will be and precisely what it will take to help consumers recover.

So we're never going to get this exactly right. We won't have the perfect number of Call Center agents on duty or precisely the right number of “boots on the ground” in precisely the right places. We can risk either having too much help for consumers—or having too little. We must spend every penny wisely, of course, but I know which side of that “too much or too little” ledger I want to be on. We've put consumers through enough of a ringer with this transition already, and short-changing them on help when they need it is not part of the FCC playbook.

In the end, we will get through this—not without bumps—and emerge on the other side with better television service for consumers as well as new spectrum for public safety and advanced wireless services. It will be quite a feat when it's all done.

Finally, for any folks listening out there who haven't set their boxes up yet and tried them out, or maybe haven't bought the box or, worse, haven't ordered their coupons—do it right now. Today. This morning. Immediately. You might not have time to make it a seamless transition at this late date, but at least you can cut your losses and get that old analog set working for you in the Digital Age. For help: 1-888-CALLFCC or www.dtv.gov. Thanks—and on to June 12!