

## **STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RICK BOUCHER**

### **SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET**

#### **Oversight of the DTV Transition**

**March 26, 2009**

The subcommittee will come to order.

This morning we examine the status of the Digital Television Transition since the passage of legislation postponing the final date for analog signal termination from February 17 to June 12.

Much has occurred since that measure became law:

- Under the thoughtful leadership of Acting Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information, Anna Gomez, the waiting list for coupons, a major factor in our decision to postpone the transition, has been cleared, truly a major accomplishment.
- Coupons are now being sent to applicants by first class mail so households will receive them more quickly.
- NTIA has changed its guidelines and now allows households whose previously issued coupons had expired to reapply for coupons. \
- The FCC has bolstered its call centers which at the time we postponed the transition were, due to inadequate resources, in disarray.
- And the results of this progress are clear. When we postponed the transition, according to the Nielsen Service, 6.5 million homes were totally unprepared for the transition and would have lost all television service had the transition taken place on February 17. That was 5.7 percent of all TV viewing homes.

Today, 4.1 million households remain unprepared, a number that is 3.6 percent of TV viewing households, a major improvement, but much remains to be done to enable the preparation of the currently unprepared homes.

Congratulations are due to Ms. Gomez and to Acting FCC Chairman Michael Copps for their stewardship of the transition at a difficult and challenging time, and I appreciate their work.

But challenges lie ahead, and today's hearing has as its purpose achieving a full understanding of those challenges and the best means of addressing them.

These questions need answers:

- Will we have enough converter boxes to meet the demand prior to June 12? I have serious doubts that we will under current forecasts.
- Could there be a spike in demand for coupons in the weeks prior to June 12 as there was last December and early January? If so, what is NTIA doing to meet such elevated demand?
- And what steps are being taken to make technical assistance available to homes in low income and rural areas of the nation where technical help may not be readily available?

Today's hearing will examine these and other future needs as we prepare for the June 12 transition date.

I welcome today's witnesses.