

Sirs:

At a news conference today regarding the coupon program to offer citizens a \$40 discount on a TV converter box, so that analog televisions could be used once the whole country goes digital, we were informed that the coupons would not be available to people with a post office box address.

If this is true, a huge portion of the population of Alaska, and certainly broad areas of the rest of the United States, will not have access to these coupons. You should be aware that people in rural areas across America have access to their mail ONLY THROUGH POST OFFICE BOXES AND RURAL CARRIER ROUTES,

The application for the coupons requests an address of the applicant, and includes a box where the applicant may check if the U.S. Postal Service does not deliver mail to their home address. Many Alaskans, thousands in fact, will check that box, and we are told that as a result they will be denied coupons.

According to the Federal Register for April 24, 2008, NTIA is proposing to amend section 301.3(a)(2) to permit an otherwise eligible household that utilizes a post office box for mail receipt to apply for and receive coupons subject to providing satisfactory proof of physical residence. Unless this amendment is approved, thousands of Alaskans will be unable to receive these coupons. You also do not address the issue of members of the same family who live at different physical addresses but receive their mail at the same post office box. How will you deal with requests from members of the same family, who live miles apart in their separate residences, but share a mailbox in a rural area???

As a journalist and also a resident of rural Alaska, I would appreciate a response ASAP on how you plan to handle these issues.

Sincerely,

Margaret Bauman
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CC: Alaskan Publications Morris Communications <margie.bauman@alaskajournal.com>