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November 14, 2006

The Honorable John M. R. Kneuer
Acting Administrator
Commerce for Communications Information
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Administrator Kneuer:

I am concerned about several aspects of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to Implement and Administer a Coupon Program for Digital-to-Analog Converter Boxes released by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

As you know, Congress passed the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 that set February 17, 2009, as the hard date for the digital transition. This will cause millions of television sets to go dark. For this reason, Congress included a subsidy program that would allow consumers to receive up to two coupons of \$40 each for the purchase of a converter box. The digital transition clearly is in the public interest because it will free up valuable spectrum for public safety and offer the promise of increased wireless competition nationally. However, I am concerned with several aspects of the management of the program.

I oppose proposals that would limit participation in the converter box program to analog broadcast-only households. The determination which households would qualify for a converter box would result in difficult management and increase administrative costs. The goal of holding the consumer harmless during the transition was bipartisan therefore any proposal limiting participation in the converter box program would undermine this goal. NTIA should not enact administrative burdens that make it more difficult for consumers to gain access to converter boxes.

I am also concerned that the statutory cap of \$5 million on consumer education will be inadequate. Therefore NTIA must manage these funds carefully working in tandem with other agencies to ensure a smooth consumer friendly transition. The Government Accountability Office found that any effective consumer education program must target lower-income

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households and other vulnerable populations. Consumer outreach must also target non-English speakers and persons with disabilities.

The digital transition will be a challenging task. Success of the program will be predicated on adequate education of consumers and a converter box program that does not set administrative burdens that discourage consumer participation.

Thank you for your work in support of this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jay Inslee", written over the printed name.

Jay Inslee