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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

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Washington, DC 20515-6115

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March 5, 2008

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GREGG A. ROTHSCHILD, CHIEF COUNSEL

The Honorable Meredith A. Baker
Acting Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Assistant Secretary Baker and Chairman Martin:

The digital television (DTV) transition represents one of the most significant challenges facing our Government. At midnight on February 17, 2009, our Nation will undergo a critical technological conversion when television stations cease their analog broadcasts.

A critical element of the DTV transition is the TV converter box coupon program administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). This program, established by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, directs NTIA to make available to each household upon request up to two \$40 coupons, each of which may be used toward the purchase of a digital-to-analog converter box. Analog television sets that receive television signals over the air must be connected to a converter box to continue to receive and display television signals after the DTV transition.

Section 3005 of the Deficit Reduction Act set aside \$1.5 billion for the TV converter box coupon program. After administrative costs, those funds will provide 33.5 million coupons. Pursuant to the rules adopted by NTIA for the program, the first 22.25 million coupons are available to any households, and the last 11.25 million coupons are available only to homes that do not subscribe to a cable or satellite service.

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More than 2 million households requested more than 4 million coupons during the first month of the TV converter box coupon program. While it remains to be seen how many coupons will ultimately be redeemed, at that rate, the supply of coupons could be exhausted after just nine months. We trust you share our view that no consumer should be left unprepared for the DTV transition simply as a result of insufficient funding of the TV converter box coupon program. We therefore specifically request that on the dates of March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 of this year, you inform us in writing regarding whether you anticipate that additional funds will be needed for the TV converter box coupon program in order to accommodate coupon requests from any eligible household.

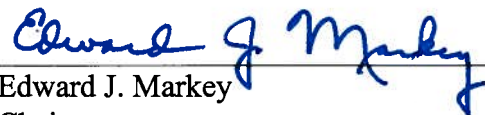
Those who rely on analog televisions for over-the-air reception should not have their TVs go unexpectedly dark after the DTV transition. Television is the primary source for Americans to receive public safety and national security information, as well as news, educational, and entertainment programming. We appreciate your assistance in ensuring this does not happen.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact us, or have your staff contact Amy Levine or Colin Crowell with the Committee staff at (202) 226-2424.

Sincerely,



John D. Dingell
Chairman



Edward J. Markey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Telecommunications
and the Internet

cc: The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Cliff Stearns, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet

The Honorable Michael Copps, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission

The Honorable Meredith A. Baker

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin

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The Honorable Jonathan Adelstein, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission

The Honorable Deborah Taylor Tate, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission

The Honorable Robert McDowell, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission