

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 16, 2008

Meredith Baker
Acting Assistant Secretary
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1402 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Ms. Baker:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding how the Digital Television transition will affect millions of senior citizens throughout the country.

Seniors could suffer real consequences if their TVs will not operate past February 17, 2009, including isolation from society, anxiety, or mental or physical decline. Since seniors are more likely to be unfamiliar with new technology, and to have physical, financial or transportation barriers that would prevent them from purchasing and installing a converter box, we continue to be concerned about how NTIA is addressing those barriers. Many seniors face considerable physical challenges associated with the transition, and there are hundreds of thousands of homebound seniors who have no help in purchasing and installing the converter boxes.

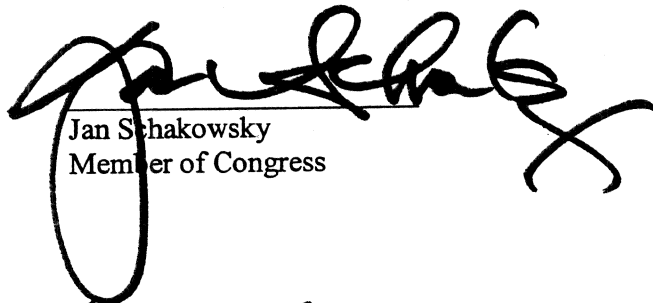
How specifically will NTIA help seniors overcome the technological and physical barriers that the transition will entail? What is NTIA doing to ensure that the homebound elderly are not left in the dark? What plans are NTIA developing on the local level, and with what organizations, to assist seniors with those challenges? What steps is NTIA taking to ensure that seniors are not subject to scams or predatory practices?

We were pleased to learn that NTIA has issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that proposes to change the definition of "household" to include residents of nursing homes or retirement facilities. However, as the transition is approaching quickly, we urge you to formulate and implement the rule as quickly as possible so that seniors have ample time to prepare for the transition. Further, we strongly encourage you to ensure that the rule is not burdensome to seniors by including provisions that make certain that seniors who have been previously denied access to coupons due to the original regulation be granted coupons without having to resubmit their request.

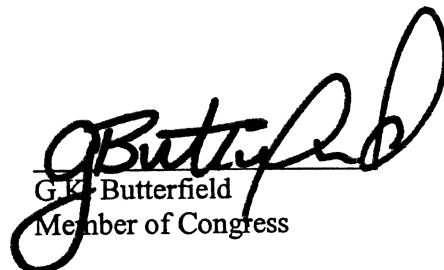
Finally, we noted in the NPRM that "NTIA must be assured that coupons are distributed to verifiable residents of these facilities and that the Coupon Program is administered effectively within the existing resources Congress has made available." Given the challenges that the outreach will entail, and the additional work that will have to be done after the rule is developed, we are concerned that the NTIA's resources may be too scarce to complete its mission. What additional resources, if any, does NTIA require from Congress to do so?

Again, we want to reiterate our concerns about the impacts the digital television transition will have on seniors if these problems are not addressed quickly. As the transition becomes closer, we must act now to ensure that our most vulnerable constituents are prepared for the transition to digital television. We look forward to your prompt response.

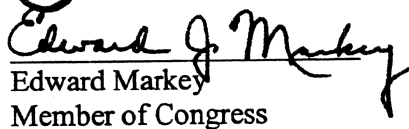
Sincerely,



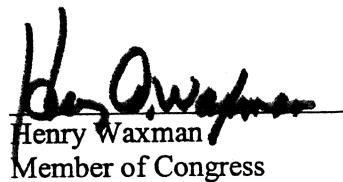
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



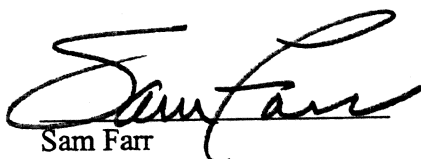
G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



Edward Markey
Member of Congress



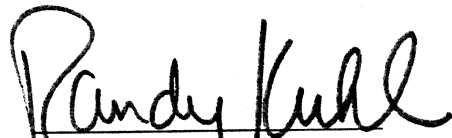
Henry Waxman
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



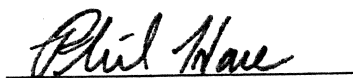
Albio Sires
Member of Congress



John R. Kuhl, Jr.
Member of Congress




Brad Miller
Member of Congress

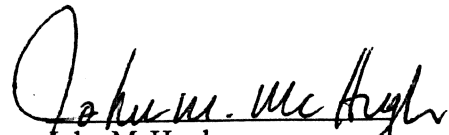


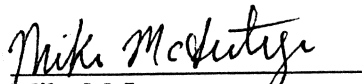
Phil Hare
Member of Congress

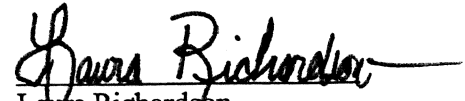



Steven Rothman
Member of Congress

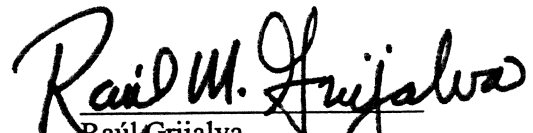

Russ Carnahan
Member of Congress



John McHugh
Member of Congress

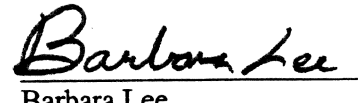

Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress

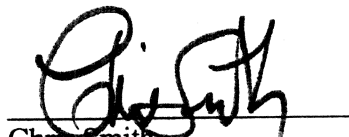

Laura Richardson
Member of Congress

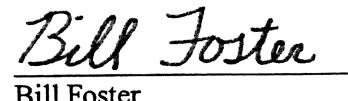

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

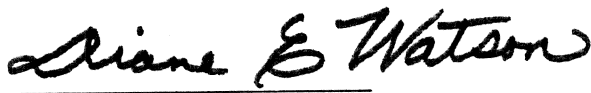

Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress

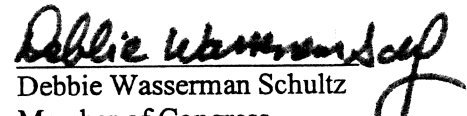

Andre Carson
Member of Congress

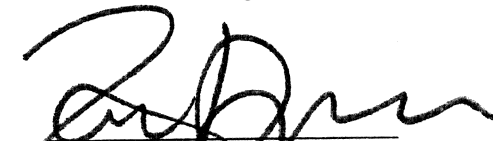

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


Chris Smith
Member of Congress


Bill Foster
Member of Congress


Diane Watson
Member of Congress


Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress


Zack Space
Member of Congress