

CHAIRMAN KEVIN J. MARTIN STATEMENT

**Providence Baptist Church
6339 Glenwood Ave
Raleigh, NC 27612**

Wednesday, January 14, 2008

Good afternoon. Thank you for being here, and thank you to the Providence Baptist Church for hosting this event today. It's always great to be back in North Carolina.

On February 17, 2009 – just 34 days from today – the country will make the switch from analog to digital television. This switch is the biggest change in television since it went from black-and-white to color in the 1950s.

And the switch to digital TV is going to be even more exciting. The benefits of digital TV include –

- Clearer, richer pictures
- High-definition DVD-like quality
- Better sound
- And more free channels

One of the most important questions to ask yourself today is what you need to do to be ready for the transition. There are three ways to prepare:

1. One option is to connect your older (analog) TV to a digital-to-analog converter box. Every household may apply for up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, toward the purchase of eligible converter boxes. The coupons may be used at participating consumer electronics retailers, including some online and mail-order retailers. But, as you may have heard, the TV Converter Box program has reached its funding ceiling. However, coupon requests from eligible households will be filled as funds from expiring coupons become available. If you apply for a coupon today and are eligible, NTIA will place you on a waiting list and will receive coupons on a first-come-first-served basis as funds from expiring coupons become available. Coupons will expire within 90 days of the date they are mailed. You can apply for coupons at www.DTV2009.gov, by calling 1-800-DTV-2009 or 1-800-530-2634 (TTY), or by sending your coupon application by mail (P.O. Box 2000, Portland OR 97208) or by FAX (1-877-DTV-4632).

2. Another option is to buy a television with a built-in digital tuner.

3. And, the third option is to subscribe to a pay television service, such as cable or satellite TV.

On Thursday, January 15th, broadcast television stations in Raleigh will participate in a state-wide digital television “soft test” to help viewers determine whether they are ready for the switch. That means that from 6:25 PM to 6:30 PM, and again from 7:30 PM to 7:32 PM, television stations will shut off their regularly scheduled analog broadcasts for a few minutes and will turn on their digital signals. Viewers whose televisions are not DTV-ready will see a message with information that will help them figure out what they need to do to prepare for the transition.

The transition to digital TV is an exciting one, and it would not be possible with the help of so many people here today and many others working behind-the-scenes. DTV outreach success depends on the commitment of the local community – including local industry, governmental, and nongovernmental leaders. Community stakeholders must take a leadership role for such large-scale messaging to take effect. Today, I’d especially like to thank the North Carolina broadcasters for your leadership and participation in tomorrow night’s soft test and for all that you are doing to

educate consumers about DTV. I would also like to thank Mayor Charles Meeker and Cable/RTN Administrator Michael Williams for all the work that you, your staff, and the community you represent have done to educate consumers about the transition. You have provided such great support and leadership in this effort. I am impressed with the outreach effort here in Raleigh, and I am confident that your continued efforts will help make the transition to digital TV a successful one.

The Commission has tried to help reach out to consumers as well. FCC staff has been on the ground here in Raleigh to promote the transition and to meet with community leaders who can help promote the transition as well.

For example –

- At La Posada, an event at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds that attracted more than 10,000 people, FCC staff set up an exhibit, answered questions in English and Spanish, and helped people sign up for converter box coupons.
- Our on-the-ground staff has worked with the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina, which serves more than 1/3 of the state. The

food bank helped distribute information and identify additional partner organizations for further DTV outreach.

- FCC staff spoke at a luncheon held by the North Carolina Association of American Indian Affairs.
- And the FCC also collaborated with the Raleigh Housing Authority, which distributed DTV information to all of its housing units

The FCC is committed to ensuring that no American is left in the dark. Each of us here today wants to be sure that the American public continues to receive programming on February 17, 2009 and beyond. The next 34 days undoubtedly will be challenging. Nevertheless, it is my hope that through the combined efforts of government, industry, and grassroots organizations, American consumers will reap the rewards that the digital transition has to offer.