

**Statement
Of**

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Federal Communications Commission**

FCC En Banc Hearing

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Thank you Mr. Chairman and Commissioners for allowing me to provide a report on the FCC's DTV outreach efforts and our experiences with the February 17th transition. I will provide some highlights of this work and what we learned, and then you will hear from Patrick Webre who will provide more details about our efforts in local communities around the country.

As you know, in the weeks and months prior to February 17th, outreach was conducted by FCC staff in every DMA in the country. After passage of the Delay Act, we focused our "boots on the ground" consumer education, action, and assistance campaign on the markets that had network affiliates completing their transition on February 17th. Based on filings received from broadcast stations, we deployed FCC staff (sometimes within hours of those filings) to be in 103 DMAs plus Puerto Rico for the week of February 17th.

One of the key lessons learned from February 17, 2009 is that it was critical to have staff on the ground in each of the markets where stations were completing their transitions. However, as you heard today from others, only about one-third of all full-power TV stations have completed their transitions to all-digital broadcasting. Further, because the stations that

completed their transitions reach only about 15% of the nation's households, many more consumers will be affected by stations yet to complete their transitions. It is therefore anticipated that the Commission will be unable to adequately staff with FCC resources alone, all of the markets that will be completing their transitions by June 12, 2009. We must identify organizations that are willing to help and that can be trained in advance so that they can perform a role similar to the one provided by FCC personnel. This is especially true considering the large populations of some of the markets that will be completing their transitions on June 12th. Hence, a key element of our outreach plan going forward will emphasize partnerships with local, state, and tribal governments and community-based organizations for outreach and consumer assistance.

A second lesson learned is the importance of full-service walk-in help centers for consumers in local communities. As you will hear from Patrick, these centers are critical as places where people can go to get answers to their questions about the transition, apply for coupons, learn how to install and operate their converter box, and get assistance with respect to basic antenna and reception issues. While some people will call the call center to get help (as you will hear from Andrew), there will be many consumers who

will want to go to a place where someone can actually show them, not just tell them, how to prepare for the transition.

Similarly, the Wilmington, Hawaii and February 17th transitions all taught us that there will be some consumers who will need in-home assistance. We need to identify in advance and train organizations that will provide this level of support as trusted sources for consumers in communities throughout the country.

Toward that end, we will continue to encourage local community-based organizations, local government offices, and other local entities to volunteer the resources needed to host and staff walk-in centers and provide in-home assistance services. But we expect that many organizations may need funding in order to provide these services. Therefore, with the potential for funding to be made available as a result of the Economic Stimulus Plan, we anticipate working closely with NTIA and releasing a solicitation seeking proposals for walk-in centers and in-home installation assistance. The potential funding provides further opportunity for local governmental entities, grass roots organizations and other community based organizations to provide the necessary hands-on assistance that many

consumers will require. We encourage such organizations to be thinking now about how they might be able to do that.

We also learned lessons about messaging for consumers. As Patrick will tell you, we were receiving daily, (and in some cases even more frequently) reports from our staff around the country. From these reports early on, it became apparent that we needed to emphasize the importance of scanning and rescanning for channels. This was also reinforced by what we were hearing from broadcasters with respect to the calls and questions they were receiving. We subsequently issued another Consumer Scanning Guide, and our on-the-ground staff emphasized scanning even more in their outreach efforts. Going forward, we know we will need to continue to get timely reporting about challenges consumers are facing so that we can again prepare useful and timely information that can be made available to consumers by our on-the-ground staff and other partners, as well as through the agents answering calls from consumers at the call center.

Another challenge we know consumers experienced on February 17th was knowing whether and how they needed to reposition their antenna in order to receive some stations' digital channels, whether they needed a new antenna all together, or whether they were just outside of the area in which

they would receive the station they were looking for. It should be noted that, just like what we saw in Wilmington and Hawaii, in some cases, what consumers thought were antenna or reception issues turned out not to be antenna or reception issues, but rather, issues of the consumer just needing help installing the converter box correctly and/or scanning for channels. In any event, to address questions from consumers about what they should expect in terms of reception of channels in their local area, as you will hear from Julie Knapp in a moment, the FCC developed and made available a very useful mapping tool. Going forward, we know we need to focus our outreach efforts even more on antenna and reception issues and related questions from consumers. We also envision that organizations that have walk-in centers and provide in-home installations will also need to focus more on being able to answer antenna questions from consumers and help consumers with such issues.

And, the last lesson learned I'd like to mention is the importance not only of developing timely consumer messaging and tools for consumers to help them with the transition, but also the importance of having adequate time to train our staff and other partners, who will be in or traveling to communities around the country, as well as all the hundreds or thousands of

agents who will be answering calls from consumers. The additional time afforded by the Delay Act should enable us to be able to do so.

Conclusion

As others have already stated, much work remains. Our outreach going forward will capitalize on the talents and dedication of the people who have been working for and with us to help prepare consumers in communities throughout the country. We will build on the existing strong partnerships with industry, governmental, and community based organizations, and we will foster new ones. We will endeavor to find ways to assist organizations who may be willing to establish local walk-in centers and/or who are trusted sources in the community and willing to conduct in-home assistance, but who may need funding to do so. As NTIA noted as well, we will continue to target our efforts toward reaching and assisting the most vulnerable consumers at risk of being left behind if they fail or are unable to act. We will continue to emphasize the importance of consumers preparing now, not later, and we will encourage everyone who is prepared, to help others who may not be. We have a long road ahead of us. Thank you.