

**Statement  
Of**

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**FCC En Banc Hearing**

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Thank you Mr. Chairman and Commissioners for allowing me to report on the FCC's DTV on-the-ground outreach efforts during the week of February 17, 2009. For some time now, a team of FCC volunteers have been performing DTV outreach throughout the country. Each volunteer is assigned to one of six regions – Pacific, West Central, Southwest, Southeast, East Central and Northeast. Each region has an FCC “Regional Coordinator” and within each region are FCC “DMA Coordinators” who have been working with the broadcast stations, state broadcasters associations, local government offices and officials, consumer electronics retailers, government contractors and grantees, community based organizations, and other key partners in their DMAs. By the week of February 17<sup>th</sup> we had many “seasoned” FCC DTV consumer education and outreach specialists who were able to mobilize into the DMAs that had one or more network affiliates completing their transitions.

As Cathy mentioned, FCC staffers were in 103 DMAs plus Puerto Rico during the week of February 17th. FCC on-the-ground staff followed a specific action plan during that week that featured the following daily activities:

We stayed in close contact with the broadcast stations completing their transitions to assist with their consumer activities such walk-in help centers, phone banks, community events, and messaging. Our on-the-ground staff were also able

to learn about any technical issues or problems that may have arisen and act as a liaison for the Commission.

We set up and staffed ad hoc walk-in help centers at libraries, county or local government buildings, community based organization locations, retail locations, or at the broadcasters' facilities. Our on-the-ground staff were able to answer consumer questions about the transition, provide converter box demonstrations, assist with antenna and reception issues, and help consumers apply for coupons.

We visited local government offices to ensure that they understood what was happening, that they knew which stations in their areas were completing their transitions, which ones were not, and which ones may be providing an enhanced night light service for their viewers. Our on-the-ground staff also provided local government offices with answers to frequently asked questions and shared copies of key consumer publications such as our converter box installation guides, our antenna fact sheet and our troubleshooting guide.

We visited libraries to encourage them to establish an ad hoc walk-in help center during the week of February 17<sup>th</sup>. Our on-the-ground staff also offered to train librarians and their staff on the key messages, answers to frequently asked questions, and on how to conduct converter box demonstrations for consumers.

We visited local retail outlets that sold digital-to-analog converter boxes to check availability, price points, and features such as analog pass-through capability.

We delivered media kits to the local newspapers and radio stations, and visited fire departments and community based organizations to alert them to the transition and what it means for consumers.

Our on-the-ground staff also provided headquarters with detailed daily reports on their DMAs, including the status of local call centers, walk-in centers and in-home assistance services, as well as the overall state of affairs of the DMA, any challenges they encountered, and any actionable items.

We received important real-time information from our on-the-ground staff, and many success stories were reported. For instance, two of our staff members who are DMA Coordinators for markets with stations that were not completing their transitions on the 17<sup>th</sup> were deployed to Rockford, Illinois, where all of the top four network affiliates were completing their transitions on or before February 17<sup>th</sup>. With very little lead time, our Coordinators were able to establish and staff walk-in help centers at four libraries and a community center in Rockford. The broadcast stations promoted the walk-in centers by providing the locations and their days and hours of operation. Over the course of three long-hour days, our

Coordinators were able to help approximately 400 consumers and answer their questions regarding coupons, converter boxes, and antenna and reception issues.

It's also worth noting that because of the required rapid pace involved in the FCC's implementation of the DTV Delay Act, our on-the-ground staff had to be mobilized to DMAs throughout the country in a matter of days, and in some instances, plans had to be changed on the fly based on the information we were receiving real-time from the stations. For instance, the week prior to February 17<sup>th</sup>, when we received notifications from all of the top four network affiliates in Dayton, Ohio that they planned to complete their transitions by February 17<sup>th</sup>, our DMA Coordinator for Dayton made travel arrangements and set up meetings and events there for the next several days. After he arrived in Dayton, we received notice that all four network affiliates had decided to remain on in analog. We had to quickly redeploy our Coordinator to Parkersburg, West Virginia, where their sole network affiliate had decided to end analog service on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Our Coordinator was able to hit the ground running, meeting with the station's general manager and local officials, dropping off press kits and providing information to the local radio stations and newspaper, and visiting a number of consumer electronics retailers.

While we have been conducting consumer education and outreach for some time, and were actively engaged in the earlier transition completions in Wilmington, North Carolina and Hawaii, we were able to obtain additional real-world experience as a result of our on-the-ground operations throughout the country during the week of February 17<sup>th</sup>. Some of the key “take-aways” of our experience, none of which came as a surprise, include the following:

The involvement of the local broadcast stations in providing specific information to their viewers of the changes taking place in their market is of paramount importance. The stations are the best prepared and most effective in responding to issues and questions from viewers regarding reception and coverage areas of their digital signals.

Full-service walk-in centers, particularly those where the broadcast stations are able to assist with staffing and messaging, are helpful in that they provide a physical location for consumers to get more information about the transition, especially on the more detailed issues such as performing channel scans with a converter box and issues involving antennas and the reception of certain stations.

TV and radio station interviews, call-in shows, and local newspaper stories about the DTV transition have a wide impact in a market, and can be beneficial to

consumers by devoting the time necessary to explain some of the more difficult issues that may be market and station-specific.

A segment of the population will require in-home assistance in order to properly connect and operate their converter boxes and troubleshoot any potential problems with reception. A need exists in each community for in-home assistance providers, and the most effective providers are local trusted sources like faith-based and other community organizations, area on aging volunteers, meals-on-wheels drivers, and firefighters.

The DTV Delay Act will allow many consumers who have not yet received their coupons the time necessary to receive and redeem them and get their converter boxes installed and operating before their local broadcast stations complete their transitions. However, and despite the best efforts of all those involved in education and outreach, many consumers will delay purchasing and connecting their converter boxes. Therefore, we must all be prepared for a last minute rush of calls and questions regarding how to connect converter boxes and how to troubleshoot potential antenna and reception issues.

In addition to the education and outreach that we have been conducting in each DMA throughout the country, we have found that our recent on-the-ground efforts have worked well to ensure that communities are prepared and that market

and station-specific issues can be quickly addressed. We hope to replicate these successes in markets that will be completing their transitions in the next few months.

Going forward, we will have more lead time to train those charged with consumer education and outreach, including those on-the-ground, those staffing walk-in centers, and those answering calls. We will also be able to develop more specific outreach plans for each transitioning market. As others here have mentioned, however, the stations that have completed their transitions are in predominantly small and mid-sized markets. We will need assistance to be effective, particularly in the markets with larger populations that will require more staff and resources. While we know that there are many challenges ahead, we look forward to continuing to work with our existing public and private partners to educate consumers and ensure that they are prepared for the end of full-power analog broadcasting. Thank you.