



**Testimony of David K. Rehr  
President and CEO,  
The National Association of Broadcasters  
Before the  
House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet  
Of the  
House Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Status of the DTV Transition: 370 Days and Counting**

**February 13, 2008**

Good morning Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Stearns and subcommittee members. My name is David Rehr and I am the president and CEO of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). NAB is a trade association that advocates on behalf of more than 8,300 free, local radio and television stations and also broadcast networks before Congress, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and other federal agencies, and the courts.

The topic of today's hearing is the digital television (DTV) transition. In 370 days, television as we all know it will change for the better when full-power television stations nationwide make the switch to digital broadcasting. Digital broadcasting offers crystal-clear pictures and sound, more channels and more services than ever before. And it's free.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express the broadcasters' appreciation for the leadership that has been provided by Capitol Hill and in particular the members and staff of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. We also applaud FCC Chairman Kevin Martin for his leadership and the other Commissioners for their efforts to date to adopt technical rules and changes necessary to implement the transition. We look forward to working in a cooperative effort with Chairman Martin, the other Commissioners and the FCC's professional staff in the coming months to complete this important task.

**I. Broadcasters Are Committed to a Comprehensive Consumer Education Plan.**

Broadcasters are leading the way to educate consumers about the DTV transition. Every broadcast network and nearly 1,500 television stations nationwide are participating in a massive, multifaceted campaign that includes DTV action television spots, local speaking engagements, a road show that will visit 200 markets across the country and a variety of other grassroots initiatives. To help give you an idea of our efforts, our NAB DTV transition team has produced a DVD which each of you should have received, entitled *Local Station Activities*.

Broadcasters are fully committed to making certain that television viewers understand what they need to do to continue to receive their local television signals after the switch to digital-only broadcasting on February 17, 2009.<sup>1</sup> It is in our business self-interest to do so and to assure that no consumer – no viewer anywhere – is left behind due to a lack of information about the transition. Currently, there are 19.6 million U.S. households that receive over-the-air, broadcast-only signals, equating to 17% of total U.S. households. There are, on average, 2.27 television sets in these households, or approximately 45 million television sets that will be affected when analog signals are shut off in 2009. In addition, an estimated 24 million broadcast-only televisions in households also have cable, satellite or Internet connections. In total, nearly 69 million television sets may be affected.

Local television stations that today keep their communities informed and connected will remain a vibrant part of the media landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We all desire a smooth transition to digital with minimum disruption to TV viewers. For this to happen, the American public must understand what all-digital broadcasting means for them, including the many benefits it will bring, the options available to be ready for the transition and the appropriate steps to take. To that end, the broadcast industry has embarked on an unparalleled and unprecedented consumer education campaign. This is a multifaceted, multi-platform education campaign that uses all of the tools available to achieve success.

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<sup>1</sup> Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-171, Title III, §§ 3002(a), 3003, 3004, 120 Stat. 21, 22.

NAB and the DTV Transition Coalition (Coalition) have been working closely with both the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the FCC to ensure that consumers have the information they need to prepare for the transition from analog to digital broadcasting. Please see the list of the Coalition's members (Attachment A). Through the hard work and continuous efforts of the Coalition, whose membership includes more than 200 organizations, we are reaching out to local communities nationwide, particularly those communities that are most impacted by the transition.

And it's working. According to our most recent survey, seventy-nine percent of households are already aware of the DTV transition.<sup>2</sup> But there is more to be done, and television broadcasters are committed to ensuring that every American is not only aware of the pending switch to digital, but understands the steps they must take to upgrade.

Our DTV action spots are airing in nearly every market in America and during all parts of the day, including prime time. And later this month, we will be distributing new television spots to stations that will focus on the converter box

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<sup>2</sup> The survey, which was conducted in January 2008, includes a national sample of television households including those that rely solely on over-the-air television signals. Seventy-nine percent of respondents reported that they have "seen, read or heard something about the February 17, 2009 transition to digital television." Awareness was even greater among exclusively over-the-air households, where 83 percent of respondents reported they are aware of the transition. Overall consumer awareness has more than doubled since January 2007 when an NAB survey asking the same question found that only 38 percent of consumers were aware of the transition.

coupon program and will include the 800-number and Web site consumers can visit to apply for the coupons.

We'll also be distributing a 30-minute educational program in English and Spanish about the DTV transition. All of our television spots are available in English and Spanish and are close-captioned. And we have helped to produce TV spots in several Asian languages as well, including Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese. We are confident that we will reach every household in America with DTV messages, and as broadcasters, we are uniquely positioned to do so. Television stations have a long history of serving their local communities, and no one knows more about how to reach viewers than broadcasters.

Our consumer education plan was developed with the input of Starcom MediaVest Group, the largest media services organization in the United States. Starcom represents some of the largest and most dynamic marketers in the country, including General Motors, Proctor & Gamble, Coca-Cola and Kraft. They are experts in advertising and have helped broadcasters fine tune our consumer education plan to take full advantage of all the commercial inventory and other assets broadcasters have at our disposal. We have also visited the United Kingdom, Sweden and Belgium and opened up relationships with broadcasters transitioning to DTV in those countries. We have also gone to Puerto Rico, which has a high population of over-the-air television homes, and met with stations to check on progress there. Our education awareness efforts have not only been recognized nationwide, but globally as well. Just two weeks ago at a European switchover strategies conference in London, Beatrice

Covassi, the head of the European Commission Digital Broadcasting Sector, acknowledged the enormity of our education awareness campaign.

Our plan includes a variety of on-air, online and grassroots initiatives as well as advertising and other media components. We want to reach consumers everywhere they are—from their living rooms, to their computers to their radios—to deliver the message about the DTV transition.

## **II. The One-Year Countdown and 132 Billion Impressions.**

To mark the one-year countdown to the transition, broadcasters nationwide are taking a number of creative approaches to informing viewers. This week the NAB Speakers Bureau, which is the largest speaker's bureau on the DTV transition, is conducting a nationwide speaking blitz. Our speakers will address local communities at planned events in all 50 states in five days. They will provide information and answer questions directly from consumers about the DTV transition.

The combined elements of the DTV campaign will reach nearly all television viewers and generate 132 billion audience impressions<sup>3</sup> during the course of the campaign, which will run through February 17, 2009. And to date, all of the broadcast networks and 330 companies and groups representing 1476 stations have dedicated themselves to making this campaign a success. Please

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<sup>3</sup> Impressions: The number of times an advertising schedule is seen over time. The number of gross impressions may exceed the size of the population since audience members may be duplicated. Webster, James G., Phalen, Patricia F. and Lichty, Lawrence W. (2000). Ratings Analysis The Theory and Practice of Audience Research (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

see the attached list of companies (Attachment B). More are joining the effort every week. Together, we will work to inform every American about the transition and the steps individuals must take to ensure they can watch their favorite programs on February 18, 2009.

The plan fully leverages all of the assets of the member stations, including commercial inventory, online offerings, community events, talent and outdoor advertising. Many facets of the campaign have already begun, with encouraging results.

Specialists in media planning and buying, public relations and event marketing have developed programs that will surround the TV viewing public with informative communications, many of which will be hands-on in nature. NAB has crafted communications materials, including:

- DTV action spots, in English and Spanish, and other languages.
- Video packages for the stations and their news departments, including B-roll footage and other graphic elements that can be used by the stations in the development and editing of their stories regarding the digital transition.
- Action spots specifically to be aired on low power television (LPTV) and Class A stations that will inform their viewers that their station may still be broadcasting in analog even after the February 17, 2009 transition date. The spots will also inform viewers as to what actions they will need to take to continue watching their low power stations.
- Tool kits for federal and state policy makers, which include:
  - (1) A PowerPoint presentation on the DTV transition;
  - (2) A newsletter insert for newsletters in English and Spanish;
  - (3) A DTV handbill in English and Spanish;
  - (4) A consumer resource guide in English and Spanish;
  - (5) A sample press release in English and Spanish;
  - (6) A sample Op Ed on the DTV transition;
  - (7) Key points on DTV;

- (8) Banner Web site ads that may be linked to the broadcasters consumer-friendly [DTVanswers.com](http://DTVanswers.com) Web site;
- (9) A sample speech on DTV; and
- (10) A DTV background sheet.

These have been mailed to all members of Congress, gubernatorial offices, lieutenant governors, leadership of state houses, all state aging directors, state municipal association executive directors and state county association directors (including U.S. Territories).

- Toolkits have been sent to 7,661 legislators, all secretaries of state and the mayors of the top 200 populated cities. Please see attached sample letter sent with each tool kit and accompanying materials (Attachment C).
- Brochures and collateral materials have been distributed through coalition partners, at trade shows and sent to TV stations.

We encourage all members of Congress to post DTV transition information on their congressional Web sites and in their newsletters, hold town hall meetings to discuss the digital switch and use your platform as an elected official to help educate your constituents. Your local broadcasters can be a great resource during this time.

In order to seed the campaign message, member stations and networks have committed to a comprehensive program of DTV action spots, air time and other on-air features. The program is based upon a combination of quarterly DTV action spot commitments, airing of 30-minute educational programs, airing of informational messages through crawls, snipes and/or news tickers, and other impactful features, such as a 100-day "count down" program.

Despite the comprehensive nature of this multi-platform campaign, the value of this effort is a very conservative estimate, given that many elements that will be utilized to reach consumers were not included in the impression and value quantification. The more than \$1 billion value of this multi-faceted television

campaign does not even take into account the broad reach of other platforms that television broadcasters will utilize to reach all consumers with information about the transition to digital television. Not included in the campaign valuation is the invaluable reach of local news programming. Numerous local television news teams throughout the country are covering the transition to digital as part of their effort to ensure their viewers are aware of news that personally affects their day to day activities. In addition to this, broadcasters will be working with their network and syndication partners to include messages about the digital transition in story lines and content of the most popular television shows.

Broadcasters will also be working with their counterparts at college television and radio stations to ensure messages about the mandatory upgrade to digital penetrates all audiences. Radio broadcasters will also join the effort to educate America's consumers about the transition to digital television.

NAB will harness the power of outdoor media by working closely with outdoor media providers to reach consumers with information about the transition and drive them to the Web site: [www.dtvanswers.com](http://www.dtvanswers.com) for additional information in preparing to upgrade. The more than \$1 billion effort will reach into every corner of this nation, and will ensure that come February 2009, no consumer is left behind in the analog era. We are 100 percent committed to this campaign. And we welcome your ideas to make it more effective. We believe that a plan that relies on a public/private partnership is the best method to ensuring a smooth transition.

### **III. Grassroots and Multimedia Initiatives.**

Word-of-mouth and other techniques that can spread the word “virally” are critical for the success of educational campaigns. NAB has developed a program of grassroots initiatives that will provide community-level activities to drive the message home. NAB’s 730-person speaker’s bureau has a goal of providing over 8,000 speaking engagements to local high schools, senior centers, religious institutions, community centers and other groups at the local level. In fact, more than 1,200 speaking engagements have been booked. In addition, two customized tour trucks, the “DTV Trekkers,” designed to look like a television on wheels, are criss-crossing the country, stopping at more than 600 local events in over 200 markets. Today the trekkers are in Noel, Missouri and Kissimmee, Florida. Hands-on, one-on-one education and instruction regarding digital converter boxes will be conducted at these events, such as the NBC Health Fair in DC just a few weeks ago.

We have also recently teamed up with diverse organizations to help spread the word. On Sunday, December 2, 2007, the National Association of Broadcasters and the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) hosted a press conference to announce collaboration on a DTV transition educational outreach effort targeted to African American church congregations. The overall effort targeted 100 African American churches in Wards 7 and 8 in southeast Washington, D.C., and reached an estimated 25-30 thousand congregants. This area was targeted because of its high concentration of residents who will be adversely impacted by the February 17, 2009 switch to digital broadcasting. In Washington, D.C., 20.1 percent of television viewers receive free, over-the-air

television through antennas and are at risk of losing their local stations' signals, compared to 10.1 percent in Virginia and 12.3 percent in Maryland.

NAB staff gave DTV presentations at the four key churches and the pastors of the remaining 96 delivered the DTV consumer message to their individual congregations. Additionally, all 100 churches inserted a DTV question and answer document in their December 2 church bulletins and made available the DTV information sheet showing an African American family watching TV and emphasizing the date of the switch. Our press conference was covered by local stations WJLA, WUSA, WTTG and Channel 19 from the D.C. office of Cable TV. NAB Executive Vice President of Television Marcellus Alexander, NBCI President Rev. Anthony Evans, Reverend Dr. C. Matthew Hudson, the pastor of the host church, Matthews Memorial Baptist Church and U.S. Representative Eleanor Holmes-Norton participated in the press conference. Children from the church's Sunday school department also participated and wore DTV t-shirts and released DTV balloons, which made for a wonderful energy and excitement.

We've also partnered up with Univision to ensure reach to the Spanish-speaking community. On Saturday, December 8, Chicago's Univision affiliate WGBO, in partnership with Telefutera affiliate WXFT, hosted a Spanish-language televised town hall meeting on the DTV transition at Little Village high school in Southwest Chicago.

After the stations promoted the event on air, it drew over 700 people, which overflowed the 550 person auditorium. WGBO news anchor Enrique Rodriguez moderated the meeting, which included guests from Comcast (which

sponsored the event) and two representatives from NAB. The stations also turned the event into an item for the evening news, and are editing a version that will run as public affairs programming.

Given the reach of the event through broadcast television – in promotion, the ensuing news item and airing of the taped audience, the crucial audience (over 40 percent of primary Spanish speakers are broadcast-only) and in-depth personal contacts from a grassroots community event, Univision's town hall was a great success by any measure. The network is partnering with NAB to bring this format to markets across the country in 2008.

Additionally, NAB's DTV staff has been teaming with our Coalition partners to exhibit and distribute information at their annual conferences and trade shows. These grassroots efforts will be extremely important to provide further context to the transition message and will enhance the understanding of the on-air campaign. Starcom MediaVest Group endorsed these efforts, recognizing that they will provide incremental activities to some of the disproportionately affected groups: senior citizens, minority populations, lower-income constituents and rural populations. Media coverage of the transition story, in addition to coverage of many of the grassroots components, is anticipated to be significant. This transition affects many Americans and is duly newsworthy. To make sure that the DTV transition is being covered both accurately and ubiquitously by America's reporters, NAB has briefed reporters from major news organizations and plans to facilitate reporter briefings in all 50 states. We have identified and are in contact with 16,000 reporters all across the country who are

covering the DTV transition. NAB will push local news “hooks” into stories in major metro areas, suburban areas and into the heartland. We anticipate significant news coverage across local television, radio, newspaper and TV, as well as radio and newspaper Web sites. As the media marketplace continues to evolve to meet consumer needs, we will leverage stations outdoor and online assets.

Mega-retailer Walmart requested a copy of our DTV action spots to air in Wal-Mart stores, on TV screens in the video department and on in-store channels. They have also used NAB spots for training employees.

Starcom proposed that a combination of streaming and display advertising be donated on the station’s Web sites to support the transition campaign. Significant exposures are anticipated from this component of the campaign, extending the overall reach of the message.

Finally, paid media will be utilized to supplement activities in key markets where public awareness of the transition lags. Newspaper activities, efforts at public transportation hubs and at key retailers have been recommended in these areas.

NAB’s plan will drive the message of digital transition across numerous consumer media touch-points. By engaging consumers via television, in the news media, online, through outdoor efforts and in direct, grassroots events, the message will be seeded and communicated much more effectively than through television advertising alone.

#### **IV. Commitment with Accountability**

Broadcasters understand that policymakers share our concern about the upcoming transition. For that reason, we want to make clear that ours is a commitment with accountability. Our education approach that I have outlined above is aggressive and comprehensive. It also includes an element of flexibility necessary to ensure effectiveness. And, we believe that it is the best way to achieve our mutual goal of a successful transition.

Given the immense differences between communities across the country, it is imperative that broadcasters utilize a number of different tools to educate their viewers about the transition to digital. No one-size-fits-all approach to consumer education could ever efficiently educate viewers whose composites differ from market to market. Moreover, no one knows how to reach television viewers about their viewing experience better than their local broadcasters. This education initiative is an important part of broadcasters' ongoing commitment to our viewers and our communities.

We want to work with policymakers. To that end, we will commit to report our progress on the education on a quarterly basis. We will also work with and coordinate our efforts with you and the FCC to modify our plan, as needed, to ensure that consumers are fully informed about the transition and what they need to do.

#### **V. Low Power Television (LPTV)**

Full power stations are fully committed to the DTV transition. Full power stations have purchased expensive equipment, switched out cameras, built towers and taken the necessary steps to migrate to digital. Although these upgrades have cost upwards of \$5 billion, they were necessary expenses to realize the goal of going fully digital. But these investments only take us so far. To make the transition to digital complete, LPTV stations must also make the transition. NAB believes that LPTV stations can accomplish a digital transition for anywhere between \$40,000 - \$200,000 per station. Hopefully, most LPTV stations have prepared for these expenses and created business plans to accomplish these upgrades.

NAB is willing to assist LPTV stations in making a successful shift to digital television. In fact, NAB swiftly created a LPTV Task Force to specifically address LPTV issues and promote viewer access to LPTV stations after the digital transition. To ensure that the viewers of LPTV stations are protected and have the information they need to navigate the upcoming transition, we have created an action plan to help them:

1. Help FCC and other interested parties determine the scope of the impact on television viewers:
  - a. Help identify geographic areas where viewers only receive television via translators and LPTVs.
  - b. Help determine how many Americans live in “mixed” areas that will receive both digital channels and analog signals after the transition in February 2009.

2. Have NAB LPTV Task Force work closely with the Community Broadcasters Association (CBA) to develop further solutions to the analog bypass issue.
3. Urge FCC to move forward immediately to complete LPTV digital proceeding, and assign companion digital channels for LPTV and translators.
4. Educate potentially affected viewers via the DTVAnswers.com Web site and other outreach methods.
5. Create spots that will air on low power television to alert viewers that they may need to purchase either: (a) a converter box that includes an analog pass-through feature, or (b) an A/B switch route-around kit (that we hope to make available).
6. Create for the FCC, NTIA, Community Broadcasters Association and others, a kit for affected viewers that includes an A/B switch, extra cable, and instructions so that those who have purchased digital-only converter boxes can access analog stations.
7. Encourage accelerated NTIA certification and FCC review of converter boxes that include the analog pass-through feature.
8. Advise CBA on how to create a user-friendly Web site and Hotline that will answer consumer questions about the analog bypass issue. NAB is prepared to provide technical assistance.

We are committed to helping all viewers, including LPTV viewers with the information they need to successfully navigate the upcoming transition.

## **VI. Don't Jeopardize the Transition to Digital Television with Unlicensed Devices in the Television Broadcast Spectrum**

We caution that opening up the digital broadcast spectrum to portable, unlicensed devices at this time would turn the DTV transition on its head. It could create unacceptable interference—as the FCC's recent technical tests suggest. We are deeply concerned that allowing these devices in the television band will jeopardize the success of the transition and interfere with digital television

reception. It would be unfair to consumers to jeopardize the transition. Some Silicon Valley companies want to allow millions of portable, unlicensed transmitting devices to operate on television frequencies without a license. Consumers deserve better. Policies to facilitate the fullest and most efficient use of the digital spectrum and the deployment of rural broadband are, indeed, appropriate. However, I believe you will agree those policies must be fully developed and the equipment must be tested in the field under “real world conditions” to assure that new devices operating in this spectrum will not endanger viewer reception of digital television. It would be premature to authorize these devices until the testing confirms that they work in “real world conditions,” the digital transition is complete, and viewers have new reception equipment in place to receive digital television signals. In fact, the most recent round of testing has raised additional concerns about the viability of these new unlicensed devices. NAB will continue to work to protect the integrity of the broadcast spectrum for the benefit of the television viewing public.

## **VII. Conclusion**

In conclusion, I emphasize, again, that no one has a greater stake in a successful DTV transition than we, as broadcasters. It would be a disservice to the American people for you, the FCC or our industry to jeopardize the transition. We assure you that broadcasters will spare no effort to fully inform our viewers about the transition. We urge Congress and the FCC to move carefully and cautiously to protect the technical integrity of the digital spectrum and assure that television reception will not be impaired by other spectrum users. Our interests

are aligned with yours. We fully understand the timelines and importance of our mutual challenge. We don't want to lose a single viewer in the transition, and we do not intend to.

I leave you with four final thoughts: one, broadcasters are fully committed to ensuring that no consumer—no viewer anywhere—is left uninformed about the DTV transition. Two, broadcasters accept their responsibility for a massive, unprecedented on-air consumer DTV information and education campaign. Three, we stand ready to work in partnership with Congress and the FCC for additional ideas and efforts to ensure that the transition on February 17, 2009 is seamless. And four, we urge Congress to protect, for consumers, the technical integrity of the new digital television service and defer the authorization of new uses of the spectrum until Congress is assured that digital television reception will not be impaired.

The most watched shows on television come from America's broadcasters. The DTV transition will bring more excitement, more energy, more creativity and more quality than we all experienced when we went from black and white to color TV, and Americans will be wowed by this.

Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Stearns and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to participate in this hearing, and I am happy to answer any questions.