

S. 2607, THE "DTV TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ACT"

Madame Speaker, I rise in support of S.2607, the "DTV Transition Assistance Act". This measure will help facilitate the transition to digital television (DTV), a technology which holds great promise for this country.

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July 9, 2008

Madame

Speaker, I rise in support of S.2607, the "DTV Transition Assistance Act". This measure will help facilitate the transition to digital television (DTV), a technology which holds great promise for this country. It will allow for more broadcast programming with better sound and picture quality. It will provide new opportunities for wireless technologies on analog spectrum being vacated by broadcasters. And most importantly, some of this vacated analog spectrum will be used to create a nationwide, interoperable broadband network for first responders.

With the February 17, 2009, DTV transition date slightly more than seven months away, however, we must ensure that all Americans are prepared for it. S. 2607 takes a step in the right direction by solving some outstanding problems relating to the transition in a thoughtful manner.

Not all

television stations will make the transition to digital broadcasting on February 17th. Low-power and translator stations, many of which serve rural, minority, and other underserved communities, do not have a set date by which they must switch to digital. The "Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005" established a grant program to help often financially constrained low-power television stations acquire the equipment needed to make the transition to digital. S. 2607 makes those funds available beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2009, rather than in FY 2011, as provided by current law. It also extends the availability of funding through FY 2012. These changes will help facilitate the DTV transition for low-power stations so they can offer consumers the benefits of digital broadcasting.

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2005 Act also established a \$10 million program to help translator stations continue providing an analog broadcast signal after February

17, 2009. Such stations are eligible for grants of up to \$1,000 toward the purchase of digital-to-analog conversion equipment. That grant program is currently undersubscribed and includes more than enough money to accommodate every translator station. Accordingly, S. 2607 gives the Assistant Secretary of Communications and Information the flexibility to reallocate unspent money from the program to DTV consumer education.

Consumer education is the key to a successful DTV transition, and its importance cannot be overemphasized. Television is the predominant medium through which Americans receive critical public safety information and is one of the chief conduits for news and political discourse, as well as entertainment. Therefore, the most critical aspect of the DTV transition is ensuring that consumers are prepared for it. Congress mandated the DTV transition, and it is its responsibility to protect our constituents by ensuring the transition proceeds as smoothly as possible.

I am pleased to see the House consider this measure, which will contribute to a more successful transition. I strongly support S. 2607 and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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