

Committee to Question FCC, NTIA About Status of Digital Television Transition

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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Hearings Scheduled for October 17, 31

Washington, D.C. — The Committee on Energy and Commerce today announced that its Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet has scheduled two oversight hearings on the approaching nationwide transition to digital television (DTV). After February 17, 2009, analog televisions not connected to a converter box, cable or satellite will go dark because they will be unable to receive digital signals.

“The transition from analog to digital television is looming. We need to ensure that the transition itself will be smooth and that Americans are prepared with the proper equipment and instructions. While the switch to digital promises to enhance news and entertainment alike, it will be cumbersome if broadcasters and consumers are not ready,” said Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

The first hearing will take place Wednesday, October 17; witnesses will include Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Kevin Martin, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Administrator John Kneuer, and a representative from the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The second hearing will give the Committee the opportunity to hear from various stakeholders and is scheduled for Wednesday, October 31.

"If done correctly, the transition to digital television will be a boon for consumers and the future of wireless communication. These hearings will help focus federal efforts on this critical transition and should encourage consumer education to help prepare Americans for the switch," said Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet.

If implemented successfully, the transition from broadcast television to digital service will free up valuable spectrum to enhance public safety communications. It may also bring consumers an array of new, digital broadcast video services, and it will reclaim spectrum that, if allocated wisely, will enhance wireless competition and spur new wireless broadband deployment and innovation.

The Committee on Energy and Commerce has been closely monitoring FCC and NTIA progress on the digital television transition and accompanying consumer education efforts. In March 2007, the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet held a hearing on the status of the DTV transition. On May 25, 2007, Chairmen Dingell and Markey sent a letter to FCC Chairman Martin urging him to submit to the Committee his agency's plan to educate the American public on the transition. Please visit <http://energycommerce.house.gov> to view the letter, along with Chairman Martin's response.

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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