

Dingell, Markey Urge the FCC to Adopt Comprehensive Consumer Education Plan for Digital Television Transition

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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Dingell, Markey Urge the FCC to Adopt Comprehensive Consumer Education Plan for Digital Television Transition

Washington, D.C. – Reps. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce and Edward Markey (D-MA), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, today sent a letter to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) urging the agency to submit to Congress its plan for educating the American public about the upcoming digital television (DTV) transition, which will take effect on February 17, 2009. The chairmen requested the plan by June 11, 2007.

The abandoned analog broadcast spectrum will be made available to enhance public safety communications and offer consumers an array of new wireless broadband services. However, as a result of the digital television transition, American consumers with analog over-the-air television sets will have to do one of the following in order to continue receiving a television signal: purchase a digital television, subscribe to pay television service or purchase equipment to convert the new digital signal to analog. Without adequate consumer education, millions of consumers may see their

analog TV sets go dark.

The chairmen noted that the FCC is the lead agency for educating consumers about the digital television transition and instructed the agency to immediately implement a national consumer education campaign using its extensive resources and expertise.

In doing so, the chairmen expressed additional concerns over the FCC's lack of progress in educating consumers about the transition by highlighting the following facts:

- Lack of focus on consumer education at the Federal level is jeopardizing the digital television transition. The FCC has no comprehensive plan for consumer education and has requested only an additional \$1.5 million from Congress to educate 300 million Americans; by contrast, Berlin, Germany spent \$984,000 to educate 3 million consumers about a similar transition.

- Given that the FCC has requested very little funding for consumer education, it must rely on existing authorities to educate consumers. The letter suggests several initiatives the Commission could take using its existing authorities, including requiring broadcasters to air public service announcements, cable and satellite television operators to include educational bill stuffers, and consumer electronics manufacturers to include information about the DTV transition with television receivers and related devices.

- The FCC could also educate consumers by collaborating with state and local governments and Congress, by publishing information on its website, and by working with other interested stakeholders.

See the letter

- 30 -

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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