

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 16, 2008

The Honorable Meredith Attwell Baker  
Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information  
National Telecommunications Information Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Ms. Baker:

As you know, on February 17, 2009, full-power television broadcasters will switch from analog to digital signals. In the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005, Congress directed the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) to ensure the success of the transition by overseeing a coupon program designed to assist consumers with purchasing digital-to-analog converter boxes. In February, NTIA began sending out coupons.

In order to ensure a successful conversion to digital television in February, our offices, broadcasters and many others throughout our states have undertaken outreach programs to ensure that consumers obtain coupons and purchase converters. While much work remains to be done, we are encouraged by the many consumers who have already proactively requested coupons and have attempted to make this transition.

Nevertheless, as we continue our efforts to educate consumers, we have heard repeated concerns regarding the fact that these coupons expire 90 days after issuance, with no option of reissue or replacement. Consumers in our states have reported that in some locations converter boxes are sparse and many products are simply unavailable. Further for a variety of reasons, individuals have simply been unable to utilize the coupons prior to their expiration, for example because of an extended hospital stay.

We do not believe it is equitable for these individuals to lose the value of the coupon. We encourage you, funds permitting, to allow consumers with expired coupons to reapply so that their coupons may be reissued. In addition, we urge the NTIA to examine innovative solutions to this problem, such as allowing consumers to apply their coupons to pre-orders of converter boxes that are out of stock or not yet available in stores.

We ask that you address this situation in order to ensure that all consumers are able to effectively use the coupons and have a successful conversion to digital television.

Sincerely,

Tom Hark

Herb Kohl

Donna Stein

Elizabeth Dole

Mark Wynn

Jim Webb

Robert Menendez

Norm Coleman

Kent Conrad

Shirley

Ann Firth

Art Bond

Jack Reed

to Benjamin Nelson

Patty Murray 0

Blanche L. Lincoln

Carl Levin

Byron G. Dorgan