

Statement of

**Marcellus Alexander, Jr.**

Executive Vice President, Television



Hearing before the United States Senate  
Special Committee on Aging

**“Preparing For The Digital Television Transition: Will Seniors Be  
Left In The Dark?”**

**September 19, 2007**

**Statement of Marcellus Alexander, Jr.  
Executive Vice President, Television  
On behalf of the National Association of Broadcasters**

**Hearing before the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging  
“Preparing For The Digital Television Transition: Will Seniors Be Left In The  
Dark?”**

**September 19, 2007**

Good morning Chairman Kohl, Ranking Member Smith and fellow members. My name is Marcellus Alexander, Jr., and I am testifying today on behalf of the National Association of Broadcasters where I serve as Executive Vice President for Television. NAB is a trade association that advocates on behalf of more than 8,300 free, diverse local radio and television stations and broadcast networks before Congress, the Federal Communications Commission and other federal agencies, and the Courts.

I have managed and have been a part owner of a radio station in Detroit and have managed television stations in Baltimore and Philadelphia. I can tell you first hand that broadcasters are highly motivated to make certain that over-the-air 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. Local television stations that today keep their communities – and your constituents – informed and connected intend to remain a vibrant part of the media landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Key to the success of consumer education about the digital television (DTV) transition is reaching older Americans.

Broadcasters at the national, state and local levels have been coordinating extensively with government, private industry, membership organizations and others to

educate all consumers so that they understand the DTV transition. These activities began in earnest in late 2006 and will continue well after the shut-off date of February 17, 2009.<sup>1</sup>

The future of free-over-the air television depends upon a smooth transition to digital with minimum disruption to TV consumers. 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. Broadcasters have committed to educating the American public about the upcoming transition. To that end, the broadcast industry has embarked on an unparalleled and unprecedented consumer education campaign. This is not just a plan for running Public Service Announcements (PSAs), but a multi-faceted education campaign that uses all of the tools available to achieve success.

The DTV Education Campaign is designed much like a political election campaign – where the DTV transition is a candidate that starts with low name identification, and must be introduced and promoted among our “electorate” or television viewers. No avenue to reach consumers will be left unexplored.<sup>2</sup> Broadcasters have embarked on an extensive education and marketing project to ensure we reach all demographics, all geographical areas, urban and rural communities, the young and the

---

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

<sup>2</sup> NAB applauds the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) recent action to ensure that cable subscribers will continue to receive the broadcast signals in digital and analog as needed. *See* FCC Adopts Rules to Ensure all Cable Customers Receive Local TV Stations After the Digital Television Transition, *Public Notice*, FCC 07-170 (Sept. 11, 2007).

old. While much of this campaign is already underway, the full extent of broadcasters' efforts and plans will be revealed over the next several weeks.

**Broadcasters' Consumer Education Initiatives Already Underway.**

After Congress set by statute the February 17, 2009 hard date for the end of analog television, the NAB Television Board of Directors made the DTV transition its single highest priority. NAB hired a full time staff of five to focus exclusively on educating consumers affected by the DTV transition. Additionally, NAB has retained a public relations firm with several full-time staff solely dedicated to developing and deploying consumer education.

As we move forward, it is imperative that consistent, unified messaging be employed to ensure the American public, including older Americans, is not confused as to what steps they need to affirmatively take to ensure their continuity of broadcast TV reception. With a large number of major stakeholders and a variety of groups affected by the DTV transition, NAB is helping coordinate the DTV Transition Coalition. With more than 160 businesses, trade associations and membership organizations, the coalition is dedicated to educating consumers on the DTV transition. The goal of the coalition is to ensure that no consumer loses free television reception in February 2009 due to a lack of information about the DTV transition. The coalition is recruiting organizations that have methods they can use to disseminate DTV-related information to their membership.

Facilitating communication between groups that share an interest in a successful transition is crucial. The coalition has created message documents, talking points, a PowerPoint presentation and a comprehensive Web site ([www.dtvtransition.org](http://www.dtvtransition.org)) to promote the transition. Eight founding organizations – NAB, the Association for

Maximum Service Television (MSTV), the Association of Public Television Stations (APTS), the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), the Consumer Electronics Retailers Coalition (CERC), LG Electronics, Inc., the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) and the National Cable and Telecommunications Association (NCTA) – kicked off the coalition on February 28, with AARP joining soon after.

The following list details the efforts the industry has taken thus far to promote the DTV Education Campaign:

- **Surveys and focus groups:** NAB has dedicated significant financial resources to research, from nationwide focus groups to massive surveys aimed exclusively at over-the-air viewers. With this research NAB has worked to find out as much as possible about its “target voters” – America’s over-the-air, broadcast-only viewers, as well as households with secondary unconnected sets that receive local broadcast television signals. NAB commissioned a variety of focus groups across the country to explore consumer attitudes on DTV among specific groups of consumers, including older Americans, African Americans and two focus groups among Hispanics in both English and Spanish. This has enabled NAB to design messages that will drive consumers to a desired action: taking the necessary steps to make the mandatory upgrade to digital television. NAB is also commissioning tracking surveys beginning this fall to measure any increase in consumer awareness, which allows NAB to focus its efforts on areas lagging in awareness.
- **International DTV research:** NAB staff have visited and maintain dialogues with officials running respective DTV transition campaigns in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Austria and Belgium to learn how European nations – some of which have already transitioned to digital – are running their digital transition campaigns. NAB has also invited officials from those countries and others, including Austria and Singapore, to discuss DTV deployment issues with American television broadcasters. In fact, the head of the United Kingdom’s DTV transition campaign met with NAB staff and our coalition partners on July 31 in Washington. Many of these international representatives attended NAB’s annual convention in April, the NAB Show, to participate in a panel discussion on this topic.
- **Earned media:** NAB’s DTV transition team has a full-time media relations director whose sole purpose is 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 in New York, Chicago, San Jose and Washington, D.C., and will facilitate reporter briefings in all 50 states. NAB's earned media team, which also employs a public relations firm, will push locally-oriented stories in inner cities, metropolitan areas and into the heartland.

- **Web site:** NAB has provided extensive resources to its Web-based outreach, including [www.DTVanswers.com](http://www.DTVanswers.com) – the broadcast industry's official Web site to educate consumers, journalists and opinion leaders on the DTV transition. Beyond a tutorial for consumers on what steps they must take to navigate the DTV transition, the site also offers consumer education materials to television stations, those designated speakers giving DTV presentations as part of our DTV Speakers Bureau (see page 6), state broadcasters associations and others partnering with NAB in its efforts.
- **Congressional staff briefings:** NAB briefed more than 100 House of Representatives staffers on the DTV transition on April 30, 2007, and an additional 25 Senate staffers on July 16, 2007. It will host another round of House and Senate staff briefings in 2008 and with new members of the House and Senate in 2009 to ensure that elected officials know how the DTV transition will impact their constituents.
- **Congressional DTV toolkit:** NAB delivered a DTV toolkit to each member of Congress the week of July 23, 2007. The toolkit includes resources policymakers may need to communicate with their constituents about the transition, such as: a PowerPoint presentation, a sample press release, a sample op-ed, talking points for DTV speeches and communication with constituents, a bilingual congressional newsletter insert and a resource guide.
- **Local government DTV toolkit:** NAB has also partnered with state broadcast associations to deliver DTV toolkits and information to governors, state legislators, county commissioners and important local government agencies across the country – especially those dealing with elderly population.

### **Broadcasters Have a Comprehensive Plan For Consumer Education.**

As detailed above, broadcasters' effort to educate the public are well underway. Broadcasters have rolled out particular initiatives as soon as they were ready, while continuing to put all of the pieces in place. In the coming few weeks, broadcasters will

be making public additional plans for its DTV Education Campaign. The plan will include initiatives such as the following:

- **Conferences:** To better educate opinion leaders and communities disproportionately impacted by the DTV transition, NAB staff will attend and distribute information at more than 20 regional and national conferences in 2007 – including the conferences of the American Library Association, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, AARP, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, Congressional Black Caucus, National Council of La Raza, League of United Latin American Citizens and others. NAB staff is also attending state broadcasters association conferences to reach out to television stations with regional DTV seminars to ensure that the efforts and messages of NAB dovetail with those of our individual broadcasters.
- **DTV Road Show:** In Fall 2007, NAB will launch a national DTV Road Show – a traveling media event that will reach more than 200 cities before February 2009. NAB spokespeople will demonstrate converter boxes in person at highly trafficked events, such as sporting events, state fairs and at state capitol buildings and city halls. These events will hit a large number of congressional districts, and NAB hopes to involve government officials and their local district offices in these demonstrations and events.
- **Speakers Bureau:** NAB is spearheading a national DTV Speakers Bureau to directly educate consumers on the transition with over 8,000 speaking engagements nationwide. Already, we have recruited over 600 speakers from 378 local television stations to participate in the DTV Speaker's Bureau. In advance of our official October 1 launch of the Speakers Bureau, we have already generated 18 speaking engagements in the month of September.

With respect to the particular issue of PSAs, NAB will continue to roll out PSAs to its members. A number of stations are currently running local PSAs to drive awareness about the DTV transition. In addition, NAB is in the process of producing a public service package for all commercial and noncommercial television stations. That package will include, but is not limited to:

- **On-air announcements:** Four to six fully produced and edited 30-second announcements on the transition, and at least one 60-second version. We are currently in production of two PSAs on the DTV transition – one in English, one in Spanish – which will be distributed to stations this week. Both versions are closed captioned;
- **Video package:** We have produced an HD video package for stations to help report on the DTV transition, which includes footage of converter boxes and other products, as well as interviews with FCC and Commerce Department officials on the DTV transition, to help stations with newscasts on the transition. The package will be distributed to stations this week;
- **Story ideas and copy** for stations to use in their newscasts;
- **Graphic elements:** Graphics, artwork and other production elements that local stations and state broadcasters groups can use to create their own spots;
- **“Donut” spots:** One or two “donut” spots – 30-second advertisements produced on the front and back ends, with room in the middle for a sound bite from a local official or news anchor – where local stations can insert their local talent into the DTV public service announcements;
- **DTV educational TV program:** A half-hour educational television program on the DTV transition that local commercial and public television stations can air;
- **“Crawls”:** NAB will be working on and consulting with local stations and networks on how best to use “crawls” – or DTV-related messages that scroll across television screens during programming – to alert consumers to the transition and drive traffic to the Web site and the toll free phone number; and
- **Non-English language spots:** NAB is working with a number of groups that will produce spots in a variety of different languages for use on stations with non-English language programming. A Spanish PSA will be distributed to stations this week.

The first of NAB’s fully-produced PSA will aim to generate support for DTV and increase public awareness that the transition is underway, that the transition will be complete in 2009, and that some households could lose their television signals unless they act. The spot will then drive viewers to gain more information about the transition by visiting [www.DTVanswers.com](http://www.DTVanswers.com) – the broadcasting industry’s official Web site on the



DTV transition. It will also direct viewers to 1-888-DTV-2009, the toll-free number of NTIA that provides information about the transition as well as the converter box coupon program. NAB will also use the PSAs to help market digital-to-analog converter boxes, which consumers may purchase with a \$40 government voucher to successfully make the mandatory upgrade to digital.

We have pledged to ensure that all Americans, including the estimated 25 to 30 million persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, will be able to view the PSAs and other related-programming material. And of course, all NAB-produced PSAs and video footage that contains audio statements will include closed captioning.

**NAB is Fully Committed to Ensuring Older Americans Do Not Lose Television Access After the DTV Transition**

Technological advances like the DTV transition, while exciting for most of the country, can be difficult and frustrating for older Americans who may be less attuned to changes in the digital world. That's why it is particularly important that any campaign to educate the American people about the landmark switch from analog to digital television include special attention to the needs of older Americans.

Millions of older Americans rely on over-the-air television. In homes where the Head of the Household is over 50 years old, more than 15 percent rely exclusively on the analog over-the-air television signal. Older Americans that may be homebound, disabled, low-income, live in rural areas or have limited English proficiency are particularly vulnerable to this change, and need our help to make sure that the DTV transition provides them more benefit than difficulty.

With this special duty in mind, the NAB has incorporated a number of initiatives within our greater education campaign that focus on the needs of older Americans. First,

NAB has reached out to the AARP, the most influential group in the country dedicated to older American issues. AARP has a seat on the steering committee of the DTV Transition Coalition. Through this role, AARP is able to review and help shape the materials that the Coalition sends to its members. Further, AARP has one of the best communications networks of any member-based organization in the world. *AARP the Magazine* is the world's largest circulation magazine. As a member of the Coalition, AARP has agreed to distribute DTV-related material through their existing publications, including the magazine, newsletters and e-updates. This initiative alone will allow us to reach millions of older Americans with information about the DTV transition. In addition, the NAB exhibited at the AARP annual convention in early September and was able to reach out to thousands of older American leaders – many of whom will reach other older Americans – with DTV information.

We are not relying exclusively on the AARP, however. Earlier this month, we reached out to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), and sent letters to the aging agencies of all 50 states with a packet of information about the DTV transition. In these letters, we urged local agencies to make educating local seniors about the DTV transition a priority for the next 17 months.

NAB is working with Retirement Living TV (RLTV), a cable network focused on Americans 55 and older. RLTV is promoting DTV transition-themed televised town hall meetings across the country. NAB participated in the first of these town hall meetings in Las Vegas, Nevada with NCTA in May 2006, and helped bring RLTV into the DTV Transition Coalition shortly thereafter.

NAB's DTV Speakers Bureau is being designed with messaging aimed toward the needs of an older demographic. The DTV Speakers Bureau will reach audiences in nursing homes, retirement communities and senior centers with live speeches by trained educators, giving attendees the opportunities to ask questions in person. In the coming weeks, broadcasters and the NAB will seek out other initiatives that will help us reach every older consumer with the information they need to make a smooth transition to digital.

We caution, however, that opening up the digital broadcast spectrum to portable unlicensed devices at this time would turn the DTV transition on its head and could lead to tremendous consumer confusion. We are very concerned that allowing these devices in the television band will jeopardize the success of the transition and could cause permanent damage to the over-the-air digital broadcast system. Some Silicon Valley companies want to allow millions of transmitting devices to operate on television frequencies, without a license. We hope you will agree that our country should enact policies that facilitate the deployment of rural broadband without permanently endangering reception on millions of new digital television sets and government subsidized digital to analog converter boxes. Today local broadcasters and state broadcaster associations will be coming to Congress to speak to you about this issue.

In closing, we firmly believe that the benefits of this transition – including a clearer television picture, better sound and more channels – will endear older Americans to the switch to digital so that while the technological change may involve some hassle, it will be worth the effort in the long run. We look forward to working with this Committee and are happy to answer any questions you may have.