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Memorandum

To: State Aging Directors
From: Bernice Hutchinson
Subject: DTV Update
Date: February 24, 2009

With the DTV Delay Act and the Economic Stimulus Package now signed into law, the federal government has a number of new activities underway to enhance DTV education and outreach efforts.

More than \$650 million dollars has been set aside as part of the stimulus package for the DTV coupon program, process enhancements, and consumer services. The FCC and Department of Commerce have identified a number of priorities that include clearing the coupon waiting list, expediting coupon processing, finding remaining households, enhancing consumer services and coordinating Commerce and FCC partner efforts. The stimulus money for DTV efforts will be divided into four categories -- additional coupons (\$490 million), coupon distribution (\$38 million), four month extension process enhancements (\$32 million) and FCC/Department of Commerce Consumer Services (\$90 million).

The infusion of new money will jump start the growing waiting list for converter box coupons, estimated at more than 4 million last week. Reports from the U.S. Commerce Department say the coupon program could get the stimulus money in about two to three weeks. Commerce is also estimating that new process enhancements – expanded call centers, use of first class mail to get coupons to consumers, use of one integrated call center **1-888-CALLFCC**, and additional staff – will get coupons into the hands of consumers quicker. The goal of the coupon program is to reduce the wait to one and a half weeks from the time of request to receipt of the converter box coupons. More than 12.25 new coupons will be made available from the stimulus. An additional 1.5 to 3 million coupons will be recycled from expirations.

Recent reports have suggested a severe shortage of the converter boxes and that many retailers have simply run out. The Commerce Department has confirmed that more boxes are in production and that manufacturers will get new shipments of converter boxes out to retailers across the nation in early April.

Both the FCC and Department of Commerce have changed their messaging to urge consumers to, “Apply, Buy, Watch DTV Now” and revised materials that encourage consumers not to wait until June 12, 2009. Groups interested in securing a “loaner” converter box for educational events or for training volunteers may contact Barbara Brown at the Department of Commerce, bbrown@ntia.doc.gov.

More than 500 full-powered television stations have made the switch from analog to digital on or before February 17, 2009. However, some stations that transitioned will continue to transmit consumer and emergency information in analog (can be identified if the “Nite Lite” column is checked on the chart). For a complete list of stations that have transitioned, log onto: http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-09-221A3.xls.

NASUA will continue to keep you informed as new DTV information becomes available.



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Memorandum

To: State Aging Directors
From: Bernice Hutchinson
Subject: DTV Update
Date: February 2, 2009

Just moments ago, the House passed a measure to extend the DTV transition date from February 17 to June 12. Today's House vote was 264 to 158 in favor of the delay. It will now go to the president for signature. The Bill provides for a delay of transition and not additional appropriation for education and outreach about the transition.

The Bill, S. 352 – DTV Delay Act, was put together by leaders of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, passed the Senate by unanimous voice vote on January 26.

In 2005, Congress required broadcasters to switch from analog to digital signals to free up valuable chunks of wireless spectrum to be used for commercial services and interoperable emergency-response networks. Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Commerce hit a \$1.34 billion funding limit for coupons to subsidize digital TV converter boxes for consumers. The coupon program allows consumers to request up to two \$40 vouchers per household to help pay for the boxes, which translate digital signals back into analog ones for older TVs. The boxes generally cost between \$40 and \$80 each and can be purchased without a coupon.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the arm of the Commerce Department administering the program, is now sending out new coupons as older, unredeemed ones reach a 90-day expiration date and free up more money. The NTIA had nearly 2.6 million coupon requests on a waiting list last week. A delay in transition will allow for more time to inform, educate and assist older adults with the transition.

NASUA will continue to monitor DTV developments and will keep you informed as additional details become available. If you have questions, please contact me at bhutchinson@nasua.org.



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Memorandum

To: State Aging Directors
From: Bernice Hutchinson
Subject: DTV Update
Date: January 28, 2009

Just hours ago, the House failed to approve a measure that would move the digital television transition date from February 17 to June 12. Today's House vote was 258 to 168, falling 26 votes short of the two-thirds majority required for bills placed on the suspension calendar. House members who objected to postponing the nationwide switch to digital only broadcasting argued that doing so would only confuse consumers and burden the broadcasting and telecommunications industries.

The bill, put together by Democratic and Republican leaders of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, passed the Senate by **unanimous** voice vote on January 26.

In 2005, Congress required broadcasters to switch from analog to digital signals to free up valuable chunks of wireless spectrum to be used for commercial services and interoperable emergency-response networks. Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Commerce hit a \$1.34 billion funding limit for coupons to subsidize digital TV converter boxes for consumers. The coupon program allows consumers to request up to two \$40 vouchers per household to help pay for the boxes, which translate digital signals back into analog ones for older TVs. The boxes generally cost between \$40 and \$80 each and can be purchased without a coupon.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the arm of the Commerce Department administering the program, is now sending out new coupons as older, unredeemed ones reach a 90-day expiration date and free up more money. The NTIA had nearly 2.6 million coupon requests on a waiting list last week. It is unlikely that the waiting lists will be cleared prior to February 17 transition date.

The House is likely to reintroduce the DTV Delay Act under a process that allows for lengthier debate, the addition of amendments, but only requiring a simple majority rule vote to pass. A date has not yet been scheduled.

NASUA will continue to monitor DTV developments and will keep you informed as additional details become available. If you have questions, please contact me at bhutchinson@nasua.org.



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Memorandum

To: State Aging Directors
From: Bernice Hutchinson
Subject: DTV Update
Date: January 27, 2009

Last evening, the U.S. Senate unanimously approved legislation to delay the nation's digital television transition from February 17, 2009 to June 12, 2009. This would give consumers an additional four months to prepare for the DTV switch. Many lawmakers worry that an estimated 20 million mostly poor, elderly and rural households are not ready for the switch, which requires owners of older television sets receiving over the air signals to buy a converter box or subscribe to cable or satellite television. As you know, the government's DTV Coupon Program ran out of coupons earlier this month, and about 2.5 million Americans are currently on a waiting list for them.

Key provisions of the legislation approved by the Senate include the following:

- In order to better educate consumers about the transition, and to provide consumers with ample opportunity to utilize the converter box coupon program, the digital transition will shift from February 17, 2009 to June 12, 2009.
- Over-the-air broadcast television stations may voluntarily switch from analog to digital service before June 12, 2009. Stations that are fully prepared for the switch can make the transition early through a Federal Communications Commission process. In addition to the several markets that already have made the transition, many additional markets are expected to be prepared to make the transition prior to June 12, 2009 – this bill will permit these stations to transition early and bring consumers the advantages of digital service as quickly as possible.
- In the event a broadcast station switches early to digital service, public safety services may start using the vacated spectrum.
- Consumers with expired coupons may apply for new replacement coupons. This provides relief to consumers who, because of natural disasters, retail or mail issues, were unable to redeem their coupons.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee canceled a review of the Senate bill, which is now expected to be considered by the full House of Representatives next Tuesday.

NASUA will continue to monitor DTV developments and will keep you informed as additional details become available. If you have questions, please contact me at bhutchinson@nasua.org.



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Memorandum

To: State Aging Directors
From: Bernice Hutchinson
Subject: DTV Update
Date: June 20, 2008

NASUA has prepared the attached issue brief to assist you with ongoing efforts in your states to reach, inform and assist older adults with the Digital Television Transition. As you know, after February 17, 2009, all full-power television stations will stop broadcasting in analog and switch to digital broadcasting. Older adults are particularly vulnerable of being overlooked during this period of transition. Studies show that older adults more likely to rely on free, over the air analog television signals. And, for many, television represents a critical lifeline. While the digital television transition may be a relatively simple process for many, it will require unique communication and assistance for others.

We hope you find this brief informative and useful in your ongoing efforts.

Sincerely,

Bernice Hutchinson
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