



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, DC 20554

Office of Commissioner
Jonathan S. Adelstein

June 5, 2008

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Kevin Martin
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW, Suite 8-B201
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Kevin:

As you know, the DTV transition is just eight months away. Our Commission is the government agency best positioned to make the transition as smooth as possible.

I applaud you for helping establish the pilot program for an early DTV transition in Wilmington, North Carolina, which will provide the Commission with valuable information on what works well and what needs more work for the national transition. It would have been helpful if more test markets had volunteered, as you tried to make possible, since Wilmington's experience may be quite different from other areas of the country. Other markets will not be assisted by large numbers of FCC staff on the ground, may not have a local government and private partners so engaged with the transition, and will face different geographic, topographic and demographic issues.

I would like to work with you and our staff to coordinate with the private sector and local governments to help promote and conduct brief "soft" turn-offs of analog TV service in other localities across the country between now and February 17, 2009. These voluntary programs by broadcasters would educate consumers and help identify potential problems before the hard cut-off. These local programs could build to larger, region-wide initiatives and culminate in a national "soft" cut-off shortly before the transition. Consumers would receive the message multiple times before the actual transition and retailers and broadcasters would have opportunities to assess their readiness. The programs would likely attract a great deal of national and local media attention, further reinforcing the consumer education message. They would give us a larger database of experience to draw from than one test market, allowing us to identify additional issues faced by both consumers and the affected industries that we can address before February 17, 2009.

The Commission can play a major role in facilitating programs like Wilmington's and other regional and national initiatives by increasing the capacity of Commission phone banks, and working with the Department of Commerce on their phone banks, to meet spikes in demand that would result from these efforts. Commission-run phone banks give consumers a convenient place to receive neutral and objective information about the transition.

While each soft cut-off might spark a rash of calls, it would be preferable if these were handled over time in response to a series of tests, rather than concentrating massive numbers of them around February 17, 2009. And these federal phone banks provide consumers objective government information about the range of options they have to make their TVs digital ready, ensuring a clear and consistent message not affected by the self-interest of company-specific phone banks.

Even as we are commendably stepping up our efforts, the Commission can play a larger role in consumer education as the DTV transition quickly approaches. I would like to work with you to request from Congress the resources the Commission needs to provide phone banks, to facilitate a series of escalating "soft" local, regional, and national cuts-offs and to support other key components of a robust consumer education program. I stand ready to do whatever I can to assist you, our colleagues and our staff in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan S. Adelstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jonathan S. Adelstein
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission