



THE OFFICE
of the
**PRESIDENT
ELECT**

January 8, 2009

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV, Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
United States Senate

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison, Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
United States Senate

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Rockefeller, Senator Hutchison, Chairman Waxman, and Congressman Barton:

Only 28 days after the Inauguration, Americans will awake to find their analog televisions no longer receive the over-the-air signals they have always relied upon for both entertainment and emergency notification. This is the result of a decision made by Congress in 2005 and implemented by the outgoing administration.

During the Transition, we have discovered major difficulties in the preparation for the February 17 conversion from analog to digital broadcasting. These weaknesses mean major problems for consumers. Because Congress mandated the conversion date and other components of the switch, congressional action is the first step toward addressing the problems awaiting Americans.

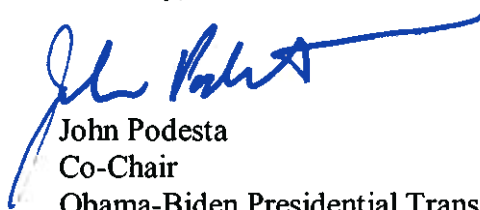
The program designed to provide consumers with a coupon to defray the cost of the digital-to-analog converter necessary for analog TVs to continue to work has run out of funds. As of today, over 1 million coupon requests sit on a wait list, unable to be fulfilled by the Department of Commerce. By early February, projections suggest that number could climb to over 5 million unhonored requests, increasing by hundreds of thousands every day. A waiver of the Anti-Deficiency Act is necessary to keep coupons going to consumers on a short-term basis under the existing authorization.

Even with the aforementioned waiver, however, the funds provided to support the conversion are woefully inadequate. Coupon demand appears headed to a level that will exceed that authorized by Congress. In addition, the government's programs to assist consumers through the upheaval of the conversion are inadequately funded. There is insufficient support for the problems consumers (particularly low income, rural and elderly Americans) will experience as a result of the analog signal cutoff. A part of the Economic Recovery Package contains resources to address these issues.

All of the above leads to a conclusion that the February 17 cutoff date for analog signals should be reconsidered and extended. With coupons unavailable, support and education insufficient, and the most vulnerable Americans exposed, I urge you to consider a change to the legislatively-mandated analog cutoff date.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you in any way you find helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Podesta", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

John Podesta
Co-Chair
Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team