



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS WASHINGTON, DC 20230

National
Telecommunications &
Information
Administration

For Immediate Release
July 24, 2006

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**NTIA SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON
DIGITAL TELEVISION CONVERTER BOX PROGRAM**

*Bush Administration begins implementation of
transition to digital television for all Americans*

The Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration today called for public comment on its proposed rules to establish a national coupon program for digital converter boxes. The program is a major step forward in the Bush Administration's efforts to help Americans receive free over-the-air television following the transition to digital broadcasting by 2009.

"With the converter box program and a successful analog to digital transition American households will continue to have access to free over-the-air television," Acting NTIA Administrator John Kneuer said. "Completion of the transition by 2009 will free up valuable spectrum that will make more broadband and public safety services available to Americans."

The program was mandated by Congress in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. The Act imposes a deadline of February 18, 2009 for completion of the conversion to digital television. It extends the Federal Communications Commission's auction authority and establishes a new Treasury Fund with auction proceeds from the return of analog spectrum from television broadcasters. It also authorizes NTIA to establish a digital-to-analog converter box assistance program under which U.S. households may obtain a maximum of two coupons of \$40 each for the purchase of a digital converter box.

NTIA's notice on the proposed rules invites public comment on such issues as which U.S. households should receive the coupons to help purchase a digital converter box; and restrictions for the coupons; the application process; coupon expiration; manufacturing standard for the converter box; and coupon distribution system that will avoid waste, fraud and abuse.

The notice to be published in the Federal Register tomorrow is available on NTIA's website at www.ntia.doc.gov. Comments are due 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

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