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One Year from 2009 Digital TV Transition, Commerce Secretary Gutierrez Highlights TV Converter Box Program at Retail Event

*More than 4.4 Million Coupons Requested Since Opening of
TV Converter Box Coupon Program on January 1, 2008*

WASHINGTON—Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez today joined key stakeholders at a Washington, D.C. Best Buy to highlight the digital television transition, approximately one year away. He urged Americans to take action and prepare for the digital television transition before February 17, 2009. The transition will offer consumers a clearer picture, more programming choices and free up the airwaves for better communications among emergency first responders.

Secretary Gutierrez was joined today by FCC Chairman Kevin Martin, Best Buy Senior Vice President Michael Vitelli, NAB President and CEO David K. Rehr, NCTA President and CEO Kyle McSillarow and CEA Vice President Jason Oxman.

“Twelve months from now, the nation will make the transition to digital television,” said Gutierrez. “With over four million coupons requested since the TV Converter Box Coupon Program opened on January 1, we are off to a great start. The transition to digital television is an unprecedented effort, and we are working hard to ensure all Americans are aware of the transition and take the necessary action before February 2009.”

Over two million requests have been processed totaling over 4 million coupons to date. More than 250 retailers have been certified with more than 15,000 locations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. The coupon distribution process begins February 17, 2008, when Best Buy, RadioShack, Wal-Mart and many other retailers should be able to accept coupons and have certified converters available on store shelves. Thirty-four converter boxes have been certified to date.

Gutierrez also applauded the broadcast, cable, consumer electronics, and retail industries, as well as the efforts of federal partners and other advocates for their continuing efforts to educate consumers about the transition.

“I especially want to thank the FCC, our other federal government partners, the broadcast, cable, consumer electronics and retail industries and other community organizations for their significant contribution in getting the word out to consumers about the digital television transition, the greatest advance in television since color TV,” added Gutierrez.

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), National Cable and Telecommunications Association (NCTA), Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), the DTV Transition Coalition, and other members of the federal government and other advocates are all working closely with the Department of Commerce and the FCC to inform the public about the transition and the Coupon Program. These combined efforts are critical to reaching those most likely impacted by the transition.

Secretary Gutierrez highlighted the digital television transition options available to consumers that rely on free, over-the-air television. Those with older TV sets without a digital tuner, who get programs free by using an antenna, have three options to consider before the February 17, 2009 transition: purchase a converter box and connect it to the TV; connect the TV to cable, satellite or other pay TV service; or buy a television with a digital tuner.

Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is administering the TV Converter Box Coupon Program. The program permits U.S. households to request up to two \$40 coupons to purchase eligible TV converter boxes for analog televisions, which rely on over-the-air broadcasts. Converter boxes will keep analog televisions working after February 17, 2009, when full-power television stations convert to all-digital signals.

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Background:

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 requires full-power television stations to cease analog broadcasts and switch to digital after February 17, 2009. The Act also authorizes Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to create the TV Converter Box Coupon Program.

By February 17, 2009, consumers need to look at each analog television set in their home that is not connected to cable, satellite, or other pay television service and make a decision:

- They may connect it to cable, satellite, or pay television service;
- They may replace it with a TV with a digital tuner, or
- They may keep it working with a TV converter box.

Some viewers watch programs over translators or other low power stations which may continue broadcasting analog signals after February 17, 2009. Those viewers may wish to select a converter box that will pass through analog signals.

Households may request two coupons, which are worth \$40 each and can be used toward the purchase of up to two, digital-to-analog converter boxes. Between now, and March 31, 2009, households can request two coupons while funding is available in one of four ways:

- Apply online at www.dtv2009.gov.
- Call the Coupon Program 24-hour hotline 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), TTY 1-877-530-2634
- Mail a coupon application to: PO BOX 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000
- Fax a coupon application to 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632)

The coupon distribution process begins February 17, 2008. NTIA will provide consumers a list of eligible converters and participating retailers when coupons are mailed. Coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed, and only one coupon can be used to purchase each coupon-eligible converter box.

NTIA encourages the voluntary participation of consumer electronics retailers. The application deadline to become a certified retailer is March 31, 2008. Consumer electronics retailers interested in participating in the program should go to www.ntiadtvtv.gov or call 1-866-296-1107 for additional information and to sign up as a participating retailer.

NTIA is responsible for the development of the domestic and international telecommunications policy of the Executive Branch.

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