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Commerce's NTIA Certifies More Than 250 Retailers and 19 Converter Box Models for TV Converter Box Coupon Program

More than one million applicants request two million coupons

LAS VEGAS—The U. S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced today at the world's largest consumer technology tradeshow that more than 250 retailers, representing more than 15,000 outlets nationwide, are certified to participate in a program to aid in the transition to digital television. Also, 19 converter box models are eligible for purchase with the coupon and more are being tested as part of the certification process.

"We're pleased that more than 250 retailers have signed up to participate in the TV Converter Box Program. Their participation will help Americans transition to digital television," said U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez. "This is a large program to implement but it's off to a good start. We know there is much more work to be done but believe promoting public awareness and continued coordination with all stakeholders will help achieve a successful transition to digital television."

"In its first week, the TV Converter Box Coupon Program leapt out of the gates as more than one million households requested two million coupons," said Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for NTIA Meredith Baker attending the tradeshow in Las Vegas. "We believe the consumer education campaign is working and the program is successfully handling requests."

Consumers may use the \$40 coupons to purchase certified converter boxes for their analog televisions, which rely on over-the-air broadcasts, to keep working after February 17, 2009, when full power television stations convert to all-digital signals. Televisions connected to cable, satellite or other pay TV services do not need a converter from the TV Converter Box Coupon Program.

On the NTIA website, www.ntia.doc.gov, is a list of certified converter boxes and retailers, to date. Eight of the largest consumer electronics retailers -- Best Buy, Circuit City, Kmart, RadioShack, Sam's Club, Sears, Target, and Wal-Mart -- are among the 250 retailers certified by NTIA to participate in the Coupon Program. Also, QVC (www.qvc.com), J&R Music World (www.jr.com), and Sewell Direct (www.sewelldirect.com) plan to accept coupons online, and Best Buy and QVC plan to accept coupons via a toll-free telephone number.

For more information about the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, go to www.DTV2009.gov or call toll free **1-888-DTV-2009** (1-888-388-2009). Retailers interested in participating in the Program should visit www.ntiadtv.gov or call 1-866-296-1107. For more information about the entire digital transition, go to www.dtv.gov. An updated list of certified converters is available at http://www.ntiadtv.gov/cecb_list.cfm.

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 NTIA to create the TV Converter Box Coupon Program.

Digital television provides consumers with a clearer picture, more programming, and frees up spectrum for advanced wireless broadband services and interoperable communications among emergency first responders.

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.

Coupons are worth \$40 each, to be used toward the purchase of up to two, digital-to-analog converter boxes. A total of 33.5 million coupons are available. Retailers estimate that converters will cost between \$50 and \$70. Between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, households can request coupons while funding remains available in one of four ways:

- Apply online at www.dtv2009.gov.
- Call the 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)

NTIA will provide consumers a list of eligible converters and participating retailers when coupons are mailed. The coupon distribution process is set to begin Feb. 17, 2008, and certified retailers are expected to have converters available by then. 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.ntiadtv.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.