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Commerce's TV Converter Box Coupon Program Now Accepting Requests to Replace Expired Coupons to Assist More Americans with Transition to Digital TV

Program's Waiting List for Coupons Cleared as a Result of Funding Authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

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WASHINGTON – As the June 12 deadline for the nationwide conversion to digital TV approaches, the TV Converter Box Coupon Program has begun to accept replacement requests from eligible households whose coupons expired without being redeemed. Meanwhile, money allocated to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has allowed NTIA to clear the digital converter box coupon waiting list.

"This is very good news for Americans who were unable to redeem their coupons before they expired," Acting NTIA Administrator Anna Gomez said. "With the backlog of applications now eliminated, consumers can apply for coupons and get assistance right away, allowing them to continue to receive important local television news and emergency information by purchasing a converter box at a reduced cost."

If an eligible household has redeemed one coupon toward the purchase of a TV converter box and the other coupon has expired, then it will be approved for a single replacement coupon. Consumers may apply for replacement coupons in accordance with existing program application rules by visiting www.DTV2009.gov, calling 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), mailing an application to P.O. Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208 or faxing an application to 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632). Deaf or hard of hearing callers may use 1-877-530-2634 (TTY).

NTIA also announced that the Coupon Program has eliminated its waiting list and is processing all coupon requests as they come in with a maximum 9 business day turnaround time.

On January 4, 2009, the Coupon Program reached its funding ceiling and placed incoming coupon requests on a waiting list, to be fulfilled as previously issued coupons expired. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided NTIA \$650 million to issue at least 12.25 million more coupons, to start mailing coupons via first class mail and to ensure vulnerable populations are prepared for the transition from analog-to-digital television transmission. Applications are now being processed on a first come, first served basis while supplies last.

"I urge all consumers who are still unprepared for the transition to act today to get their converter boxes and resolve any technical issues well ahead of the June 12 deadline," Gomez added. "Americans can start experiencing the benefits of digital television with more programming choices and clearer reception as soon as they hook up their converter box."

Consumers can receive digital television today by purchasing and connecting a TV converter box (with or without a government coupon); buying a digital TV; or subscribing to cable, satellite or another pay service. Consumers who currently have coupons in hand should use them immediately. The coupons may not be used as a rebate and must be presented to the retailer at the time of purchase.

The DTV Delay Act established June 12, 2009, as the final date by which all full-power television stations in the country will be required to shut down analog broadcasts. However, some stations and entire markets may choose to switch before then. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has announced that, of the nation's nearly 1,800 full-power television stations, a total of 641 stations (36%) terminated their analog signals as of February 17, 2009. More information on the digital television transition is available by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) or by going on-line to the Web site www.DTV.gov.

About the TV Converter Box Coupon Program:

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 Act originally required full-power television stations to cease analog broadcasts and switch to digital by February 17, 2009. The Act authorized NTIA to create the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, which was funded initially by airwaves auction proceeds. The Act originally funded the Program at \$1.5 billion, which included a limit of \$1.34 billion for ordered and redeemed coupons, with the remaining \$160 million covering administrative costs. Funds are obligated as coupons are issued. If coupons are not used and expire, those funds are returned to the Program to fill requests.

On January 4, 2009, the Coupon Program reached its initial \$1.34 billion obligation limit for active and redeemed coupons and established a waiting list of coupon requests. On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which provides funding to implement DTV Delay Act's extension of the Coupon Program. Specifically, the ARRA authorizes \$650 million for additional coupons and related activities.

The transition to digital broadcast television will free up the airwaves for better communications among emergency first responders and for new telecommunications services and offers consumers a clearer picture and more programming choices.

The TV Converter Box Coupon Program permits all households to request up to two coupons - each worth \$40 - toward the purchase of certified converter boxes. Coupons may be requested while supplies last, and only one coupon can be used for each coupon-eligible converter box. Consumers can purchase a converter box at one of the more than 32,000 participating local, phone or online retailer locations. Consumers will receive a list of eligible converter boxes and participating retailers with their coupons and may search for a local retailer on-line at <https://www.dtv2009.gov/VendorSearch.aspx>.

Consumers should call stores before shopping to ensure the desired converter box is available. Converter boxes generally cost between \$40 and \$80 without a coupon, and coupons expire 90 days from the date they are mailed.

When consumers receive their coupons in the mail, they should buy a converter box as soon as possible, and try the box with their television to address any potential technical issues. Some viewers watch programs over translators or other low-power stations, which may continue broadcasting analog signals after the digital television transition deadline. Those viewers may wish to select a converter box that will pass through analog signals.

Households may apply for coupons online at www.DTV2009.gov, by phone at 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), via fax at 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632) or by mail to P.O. Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000. Deaf or hard of hearing callers may dial 1-877-530-2634 (English TTY) or 1-866-495-1161 (Spanish TTY). Nursing home residents may apply with the paper application available downloadable at www.DTV2009.gov. For more information about the Coupon Program, please visit www.DTV2009.gov and for questions about the DTV transition, go to www.dtv.gov or call 1-888-CALL-FCC.

About the National Telecommunications and Information Administration

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration is an agency in the U.S. Department of Commerce that serves as the executive branch agency principally responsible for advising the President on telecommunications and information policies. For more information about the NTIA, visit www.ntia.doc.gov.

About the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. It is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century. The Act is an extraordinary response to promote economic recovery and growth, and includes measures to modernize our nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

For more information about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, visit Recovery.gov.

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