

February 4, 2009 - Murtha: Congress Passes Legislation to Delay Digital TV Conversion

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, announced today that both the House of Representatives and the Senate have passed legislation to provide a one-time delay in the nationwide transition to digital broadcasting.

Under current law, all full-power television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting in analog and switch to 100% digital broadcasting on February 17, 2009. Digital broadcasting provides a clearer picture, more channels, and will free up airwaves for use by emergency responders.

To assist in this transition, Congress created the TV Converter Box Coupon Program for households wishing to continue using their existing analog TV sets. The Program allows U.S. households to obtain up to two coupons, each worth \$40, that can be applied toward the cost of purchasing eligible digital converter boxes. Because of such a large demand, current efforts to assist these households have been insufficient. The Commerce Department estimates that more than 2 million U.S. households are currently on a waiting list to receive more than 3.5 million coupons.

The legislation passed by Congress today, and expected to be signed by President Obama in the coming days, will delay the nationwide digital conversation until June 12, 2009.

“Without passing this delay, millions of American households would have had their televisions ‘go dark’ two weeks from now,” commented Murtha. “The nationwide conversion to digital broadcasting will modernize our airwaves, but we must ensure that millions of Americans, particularly low-income, rural, and elderly households, have the necessary time to receive their coupons and digital converter boxes.”

The House passed S. 352, Digital TV Delay, today by a vote of 264-158. For additional information on the digital conversion, and how to apply for a coupon, please visit www.dtv2009.gov or call 1-888-388-2009.

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