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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515-6115

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October 30, 2007

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Mr. Mark Goldstein
Director, Physical Infrastructure Team
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Goldstein:

The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) has been surveying demand for Government-provided digital-to-analog converter-box coupons as we approach the February 17, 2009, digital television transition. In particular, the CEA has tracked:

1. the number of television households that rely exclusively on over-the-air reception of programming;
2. the number of analog televisions in such exclusively over-the-air households;
3. the number of television households subscribing to pay-video services, such as those provided by cable, satellite, and now telephone companies;
4. the number of analog televisions in pay-video service homes;
5. the number of analog televisions in pay-video service homes not connected to the pay service;
6. the number of analog televisions in exclusively over-the-air homes, and the number of analog televisions in pay-video service homes not connected to the pay service, that merely sit in the attic and are never turned on or that are used exclusively for non-broadcast purposes, such as the viewing of DVDs and the playing of video games;

7. the number of analog televisions actually used to receive programming over the air that will be replaced with a digital television receiver or connected to a pay service between now and February 17, 2009; and,
8. the total number of Government-provided coupons consumers will use to obtain digital-to-analog converter boxes for analog televisions actually used to receive programming over the air, taking into account that many consumers may feel they don't need the subsidy to purchase the converter boxes.

Based on that research, the CEA has concluded that approximately 24 million analog televisions will need digital-to-analog converter boxes to continue receiving broadcast television service after February 17, 2009, and that consumers will request coupons for approximately 8 million of them. The \$1.5 billion that the Government has allocated to the digital-to-analog converter-box program can fund the distribution of as many as 33.5 million coupons, including expenses.

You indicated at the October 17, 2007, Telecommunications and the Internet Subcommittee hearing on DTV that the General Accountability office (GAO) will also be surveying demand for coupons. Will the GAO conduct the survey itself, or rely on a survey conducted by someone else? If someone else is to conduct the survey, who will it be? What methodology will the survey use? What data will the survey collect? In order to be at least as robust as the CEA survey, will the new survey collect, at a minimum, the same information itemized above? When will this survey begin, when will it be completed, and when will GAO report the results?

Please provide a written response to my staff by November 12, 2007. Should you have any questions, please contact Mr. Neil Fried or Ms. Courtney Reinhard of the Committee Minority staff at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,



Joe Barton
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce



Fred Upton
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Telecommunications
and the Internet