

House Energy & Commerce Committee



Republicans

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A History of the DTV Transition

- February 1996 Congress passes law giving every full-power broadcaster a second channel to transmit digital signals on the condition that they return one channel sometime in the future and go all digital.
- Sept. 11, 1996 The Public Safety Wireless Advisory Committee report to the FCC and the NTIA expresses the need for spectrum and recommends allocating spectrum cleared by the digital television transition. Among the 509 signatories were the NYPD, FBI, U.S. Secret Service, FEMA, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Treasury, U.S. Marshals Service, NASA, California Highway Patrol, Texas Department of Public Safety, FCC, U.S. Customs, U.S. Coast Guard, AAA, U.S. Postal Service, U.S. Park Police, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Illinois State Police, State of Florida, Michigan State Police and the Iowa State Patrol.
- June 1997 24.1 percent of television households rely exclusively on over-the-air broadcasts.
- August 1997 Congress passes law requiring each broadcaster to return one of its channels by the later of Dec. 31, 2006, or when more than 85 percent of television households in its market have at least one television with a digital tuner or connected to cable service, satellite service, or a digital-to-analog converter box. Some of the spectrum to be cleared is earmarked for use by first responders.
- June 2000 16.3 percent of television households rely exclusively on over-the-air broadcasts.
- Oct. 10, 2000 Democratic FCC Chairman William Kennard describes the 85-percent test as a “loophole,” predicts it won’t be met nationwide until 2025, and suggests that Congress change it.
- Jan. 19, 2001 Democratic FCC Chairman William Kennard sends letter to Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Fritz Hollings recommending Congress eliminate the 85 percent test and set Dec. 31, 2006, as a firm deadline.
- Sept. 11, 2001 Attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.
- September 2002 Republican Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Billy Tauzin circulates draft legislation striking the 85 percent test and setting Dec. 31, 2006, as the firm DTV deadline.
- June 2003 15.8 percent of television households rely exclusively on over-the-air broadcasts.
- May 2004 The FCC Media Bureau under Republican Chairman Michael Powell proposes an interpretation of the 85 percent test that it believes would result in most markets transitioning to digital by the end of 2006, and all markets transitioning by the end of 2008.
- May 27, 2004 FCC seeks comment on whether the government should subsidize converter boxes with the proceeds from auction of the spectrum cleared by the DTV transition.
- July 22, 2004 9/11 Commission endorses pending legislation setting a firm DTV transition deadline around the end of 2006 to clear spectrum and address public safety communications shortcomings believed to have contributed to deaths on September 11th.
- December 2004 Congress passes a Sense of Congress saying it should adopt a firm DTV deadline of Dec. 31, 2006.

May 2005	Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton circulates draft legislation striking the 85 percent test and setting Dec. 31, 2008, as the firm DTV deadline
July 2005	All large-screen television receivers required to have digital tuners.
Oct. 26, 2005	House Energy and Commerce Committee passes legislation setting Dec. 31, 2008, as the firm deadline for the DTV transition
February 2006	President signs omnibus budget legislation containing provisions setting Feb. 17, 2009, as the DTV firm deadline.
March 2006	All large- and mid-sized television receivers required to have a digital tuner.
June 2006	13.1 percent of television households rely exclusively on over-the-air broadcasts.
March 2007	All large-, mid-, and small-sized television receivers required to have a digital tuner.
Jan. 1, 2008	The NTIA starts accepting coupon requests.
Jan. 3, 2008	Since Jan. 1, 850,000 homes have requested 1.6 million coupons.
January 2008	89.9 percent of TV households have at least one TV ready for the transition and 73.1 percent have all their TVs ready.
February 2008	Since start of the program, 2.7 million homes have requested 4.7 million coupons. The NTIA starts mailing coupons.
March 2008	Since start of the program, 4.1 million homes have requested 7.1 million coupons.
April 2008	Since start of the program, 4.9 million homes have requested 9.3 million coupons. 90.6 percent of television households have at least one television ready for the transition and 78 percent have all their televisions ready.
May 2008	Since start of the program, 6.7 million homes have requested 12.7 million coupons. One million coupons have been redeemed.
June 2008	90.7 percent of television households have at least one television ready for the transition and 79.1 percent have all their televisions ready.
July 2008	91.1 percent of television households have at least one television ready for the transition and 79.7 percent have all their televisions ready. Since start of the program, 10.9 million households have requested 20.5 million coupons. Of those coupons that have been in circulation a full 90 days, 6 million coupons, or 44.4 percent, have been redeemed. Approximately 9.5 million other coupons are still active and in circulation.
August 2008	91.6 percent of television households have at least one television ready for the transition and 80.6 percent have all their televisions ready. Since start of the program, 12.1 million households have requested 22.9 million coupons. Of those coupons that have been in circulation a full 90 days, 7.8 million coupons, or 47.9 percent, have been redeemed. Approximately 7.8 million other coupons are still active and in circulation.
September 2008	92.4 percent of television households have at least one television ready for the transition and 81.7 percent have all their televisions ready.

Nov. 6, 2008 NTIA sends letter to Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Dingell and Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Markey warning of potential surge in coupon demand.

November 2008 93.2 percent of television households have at least one television ready for the transition and 83.3 percent have all their televisions ready.

Since start of the program, 17.9 million households have requested 33.5 million coupons. Of those coupons that have been in circulation a full 90 days, 13.5 million coupons, or 50.9 percent, have been redeemed. Approximately 7.8 million other coupons are still active and in circulation.

Dec. 24, 2008 NTIA sends letter to Markey warning that a surge in coupon demand may force the NTIA to create a waiting list and describing an additional \$250 million authorization as one way to address

Dec. 26, 2008 Barton and Markey start discussing legislation to address the potential waiting list.

December 2008 94.3 percent of television households have at least one television ready for the transition and 85 percent have all their televisions ready.

Jan. 4, 2009 The NTIA starts putting names on the coupon waiting list.

Jan. 8, 2009 Ranking Member Barton and Chairman Markey draft legislation to address the waiting list.

Obama Transition Team requests delay in transition date

Jan. 14, 2009 Ranking Member Barton sends letters to President-Elect Obama and Chairman Waxman pointing out that consumers are ready, explaining that the program is not out of money, describing bipartisan efforts to clear the waiting list, and warning about the harms delay would cause.

Commerce Department sends letter proposing the \$250 million fix. Of the 14.3 million exclusively over-the-air homes, the NTIA has mailed coupons to 13.5 million. Of the remaining 800,000 exclusively over-the-air homes, 600,000 are on the waiting list. The Commerce Department's proposal could clear the waiting list in one to two weeks. That leaves only 200,000 homes that could lose all television service and that have not, for whatever reason, asked for a coupon. That's less than two-tenths of one percent of all television households, and less than two percent of exclusively over-the-air households.

Since start of the program, 26.2 million households have requested 48.7 million coupons. Of those coupons that have been in circulation a full 90 days, 19.8 million coupons, or 53 percent, have been redeemed. Approximately 11 million other coupons are still active and in circulation.

Jan. 23, 2008 Barton introduced H.R. 661, which would implement the Commerce Department proposal to authorize an additional \$250 million.

Jan. 27, 2009 Fraternal Order of Police sends letter opposing delay.

Jan. 28, 2009 Barton sends letter to Speaker Pelosi explaining that \$250 million fix avoids the harms of delay.

February 2009 Since start of the program, 27.4 million households have requested 50.9 million coupons. Of those coupons that have been in circulation a full 90 days, 21.7 million coupons, or 53.6 percent, have been redeemed. Approximately 11 million other coupons are still active and in circulation. Approximately 1.6 million homes are on the waiting list for 3.2 million coupons, but 350,000 coupons come off the waiting list each week. Since Jan. 4, approximately 900,000 homes have come off the waiting list and been sent 1.8 million coupons. The program is not out of money. Approximately \$650 million is still available in unredeemed coupons.