

Congressman Brady Asks Congress to Delay DTV Transition

Calls for immediate action

PHILADELPHIA -- Congressman Robert A. Brady says the February 17 mandated date to switch to digital broadcasting should be reconsidered and extended.

"With just a few weeks left before the digital transition, I was shocked to find out that after months of promising Congress that the DTV converter box coupon program was adequately funded, the Bush administration has announced that the program has run out of funds. It is unacceptable that those seeking coupons will now be put on a waiting list that already has over a million names on it. The Congress must act immediately to ensure that millions of Americans are not left in the dark on February 17," Congressman Brady said.

As of today, the waiting list has grown to 950,000. The number is projected to rise to as high as five million by Feb. 17.

It's estimated that nationally as many as 4.5 million households could have their televisions go dark Feb. 17. In the Philadelphia there could be close to 100,000 households who will lose their television reception. "Broadcast TV is more than entertainment to people in Philly. Many in the city rely on free TV to get their news, weather, important emergency alerts, and of course, updates on our city's sports teams," Congressman Brady said.

The Digital Television Transition was mandated by law in the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act. It requires that television stations broadcast in digital rather than analog format by February 17, 2009. The Act also created a coupon program to offset the cost of analog-to-digital converter boxes so that households with analog televisions can still receive free over the air television. The NTIA, which oversees the coupon program, announced in a press release on January 5, 2009 that "...starting Sunday, January 4, consumers requesting coupons from the agency's TV Converter Box Coupon Program will be placed on a waiting list and coupons will be mailed on a first-come-first-served basis, as funds from expired coupons become available."