



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Telecommunications and
Information Administration
Washington, D.C. 20230

OCT -- 7 2008

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet
Committee on Energy and Commerce
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Markey:

Thank you for your letter of September 26, 2008, expressing your concern that consumers living in the U.S.-Mexican border areas are informed about the digital transition and that they take full advantage of the assistance offered to U.S. households through the TV Converter Box Coupon Program (Coupon Program). I share these concerns and welcome the opportunity to inform you of the efforts being undertaken by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Coupon Program to address the needs of these communities.

The Coupon Program's consumer education efforts have been aimed squarely at communities – such as those on the U.S.-Mexico border – that rely disproportionately on over-the-air reception of television services. In order to gauge the success of these efforts, every Monday, Coupon Program staff reviews coupon participation and redemption data for the prior week to analyze the extent to which we are succeeding in reaching these target communities. Informed by that data, we make adjustments to our consumer education strategies to ensure that our resources continue to target those most in need.

To augment its outreach to at-risk communities, and in response to lessons learned in the Wilmington, North Carolina test pilot, NTIA recently initiated a new campaign called "Apply, Buy and Try." This campaign is intended to increase the urgency of our messaging to ensure that consumers act now to order coupons, purchase the converter box soon after receiving their coupons, and connect it to their analog television(s) to ensure they are getting good reception and to work out any technical issues prior to the transition.

These efforts appear to be succeeding. I am very pleased that awareness of the transition and the Coupon Program – as measured by household participation in the Coupon Program (*i.e.*, requests for coupons) – is among the highest in Designated Market Areas (DMAs) along the U.S.-Mexico border. Indeed, the Texas border DMAs – Harlingen-McAllen-Brownsville; Laredo; and El Paso – occupy three of the top four

spots, respectively, with Yuma-El Centro, California and San Antonio both in the top 35 markets based on household participation. In DMAs where participation is lower, including those along the U.S.-Mexico border, such as San Diego and Odessa-Midland, NTIA is increasing its consumer education and outreach efforts. Additionally, according to a September 16, 2008, Government Accountability Office report, areas with a high concentration of Latino or Hispanic households had noticeably higher coupon request rates (28 percent) when compared to areas with predominately non-Latino or non-Hispanic households (12 percent). NTIA's partners, especially Univision and other Spanish language broadcasters, as well as community organizations such as the National Council of La Raza, have contributed greatly to outreach efforts along the border. I have enclosed for your information Coupon Program data for U.S.-Mexico border communities, as well as a list of public events and other outreach conducted by NTIA and the Coupon Program, as well as Secretary Gutierrez, that is focused on these areas.

Thank you again for your thoughtful letter. While there is much more that needs to be done, I believe we are making meaningful progress toward our shared goal of ensuring that U.S. households along the U.S.-Mexico border are prepared for the digital transition by February 17, 2009.

Sincerely,


Meredith Attwell Baker
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Communications and Information

Enclosures

cc (with enclosures): The Honorable Cliff Stearns, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet
Committee on Energy and Commerce



U.S.-Mexico Border Community Data

DMA Name	State	DMA Rank	Rank USA Hhs by % OTA	% OTA	Estimated # OTA Households	Count of Coupons Requested	Over-the-Air Household Participation Rate*
Albuquerque-Santa Fe	NM	45	33	18.0	119,228	158,381	56%
El Paso (Las Cruces)	TX	99	4	30.0	88,110	185,826	83%
Harlingen-Wslco-Brnsvl-McA	TX	91	1	36.7	120,035	215,882	67%
Laredo	TX	187	8	23.1	15,197	41,775	91%
Odessa-Midland	TX	159	161	8.9	12,039	16,593	46%
San Antonio	TX	37	60	14.8	114,622	275,090	87%
San Diego	CA	27	166	8.7	89,612	123,539	46%
Tucson (Sierra Vista)	AZ	70	47	16.5	71,496	107,313	56%
Yuma (AZ) -El Centro (CA)	AZ/CA	167	6	24.1	25,874	40,622	55%

*Data as of 9/30/08

Partner Activities in Border DMAs

- **San Diego, CA (DMA 27)** – 10News (ABC) collaborated with its Spanish language sister station to host an all-day phone bank and encouraged consumers to call in and apply for their converter box coupons in August 2008. 450 consumers called into the phone bank, resulting in more than 300 applications.
- **San Diego, CA (DMA 27)** – San Diego County Aging and Independence Services worked with NTIA to host two Coupon Program presentations at two senior meal centers and assisted seniors in applying for coupons in July 2008. San Diego County Aging and Independence Services also hosted a Consumer Protection Event for Clergy in San Diego County in August 2008.
- **San Diego, CA (DMA 27)** – NTIA made a Coupon Program presentation for the San Diego Consumer Protection Group in July 2008.
- **San Diego, CA (DMA 27)** – Azteca America TV station in San Diego has a dedicated digital TV transition Web page in Spanish that links to the Coupon Program site.
- **San Antonio, TX (DMA 37)** – Telemundo distributed customized Coupon Program fact sheets and decision trees in both English and Spanish at the at their Fiestas Patrias event Parade Avenida Guadalupe in September 2008.
- **Albuquerque, NM (DMA 46)** – KNME, Albuquerque's PBS affiliate, hosted an open-to-the-public *Complete It. Connect It.* Coupon Program Sign-Up Event with NTIA in August 2008. NTIA made a Coupon Program presentation, KNME conducted a converter box demonstration and consumers signed up for coupons on the spot. In March and June 2008, KNME hosted two DTV transition Open House events to explain the transition and Coupon Program and demonstrate converter boxes. In total, nearly 200 people, many of them seniors, attended the events. KNME also has a dedicated DTV transition page that links to the Coupon Program Web site.
- **Santa Fe, NM (DMA 46)** – New Mexico Child Protection Enforcement Services distributed NTIA fact sheets to all county directors and placed copies in all county offices in April 2008.
- **Tucson, AZ (DMA 70)** – Telemundo distributed customized Coupon Program fact sheets and decision trees in both English and Spanish at the at their Fiestas Patrias event in September 2008.
- **Sells, AZ (DMA 70)** – American Indian Higher Education Consortium distributed 1,500 Coupon Program materials and applications at the Tohono O'Odham Nation Reservation in May 2008.
- **Las Cruces, NM (DMA 99)** – Coordinated Home Health Care distributed Coupon Program materials to senior clients at educational workshops in March 2008.
- **El Paso, TX (DMA 99)** – Nonprofit Enterprise Center of El Paso circulated Coupon Program materials to more than 100 non-profit members in February 2008.
- **El Paso, TX (DMA 99)** – The Rio Grande Council of Governments/Area Agency on Aging (AAA) distributed Coupon Program materials to staff and local vendors in February 2008.
- **Odessa, TX (DMA 159)** – Odessa Texas Catholic Charities distributed nearly 200 coupon applications to members, including participants in the organization's Cory Learn Center ESL Program in September 2008.