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**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Washington, DC 20515-6115**

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September 26, 2008

DENNIS B. FITZGIBBONS, CHIEF OF STAFF  
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AND CHIEF COUNSEL

The Honorable Kevin Martin  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20445

Dear Chairman Martin:

We commend you on completing the digital television (DTV) transition test in Wilmington, North Carolina. It is our hope that the lessons learned in Wilmington will help ensure a smoother transition for the rest of the Nation.

We are now less than 6 months from the nationwide DTV transition. Among the many challenges posed by the DTV transition is ensuring that U.S. citizens living near the Mexican border are adequately informed of and prepared for the transition. The Mexican border areas are different from most other areas of the country, both culturally and because residents of those areas are often able to receive U.S. and Mexican over-the-air television signals. After the DTV transition, most Mexican stations will continue to broadcast only in analog format, and all full-power U.S. stations will broadcast in digital format. Because many of the Spanish-speaking households near the border watch both U.S. and Mexican television, there appears to be much potential for consumer confusion.

The Commission has wisely elected to focus its general DTV consumer education efforts on those markets where reliance on over-the-air television is relatively high, and we support those efforts. While most, if not all, of the markets in the border region fall into that category, the Commission must take extra care to target its message to households in these areas. We understand that many Spanish-speaking households in the border region can be characterized fairly as low-income, and their ability to purchase new digital televisions or to subscribe to a pay-TV service therefore may be limited. These households will require converter boxes to continue to receive the signals of U.S. and Mexican stations on analog televisions after February 17, 2009.

Fortunately, most retailers are now only stocking converter boxes with the analog pass-through feature that will enable households along the Mexican border to receive both U.S. digital signals and Mexican analog signals on their analog sets. The unique situation in border communities, however, suggests that these households would benefit from targeted education efforts concerning the availability of a Government subsidy—available only through March 2009—for a converter box. In addition, consumers should be reminded of the importance of receiving public safety information from U.S. over-the-air broadcasters. As recent hurricanes and wildfires in the border region have shown, receiving accurate weather and other public safety information is crucial for all families in this region of our country.


The situation in the U.S.-Mexican border area deserves the Commission's special attention. We should do all that we can to ensure that every consumer is informed and ready for the transition and that every household that needs to is able to take advantage of the converter box coupon program. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,




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John D. Dingell  
Chairman




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Edward J. Markey  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Telecommunications  
and the Internet




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Charles A. Gonzalez  
Member  
Subcommittee on Telecommunications  
and the Internet




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Gene Green  
Member  
Subcommittee on Telecommunications  
and the Internet



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Lois Capps  
Member  
Subcommittee on Telecommunications  
and the Internet



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Hilda L. Solis  
Member  
Subcommittee on Telecommunications  
and the Internet

The Honorable Kevin Martin  
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cc: The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Cliff Stearns, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet