

DEMOCRATIC DIGITAL TV SUBSTITUTE

DEMOCRATS OFFER PLAN TO PROTECT CONSUMERS, ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

Nearly 21 million households, many low-income, minority, or elderly, rely solely on over-the-air analog TV reception. Countless others own at least some TVs that rely on over-the-air transmission. When our Nation makes the switch from analog to digital television, millions of American families will need a converter box to keep watching television. House Republicans, to protect their tax cuts, would force millions of Americans to reach into their wallets and pay a television tax. Democrats believe ordinary people should not have to pay for a Government decision that makes their television sets obsolete.

CONVERTER BOX PROGRAM

EVERYONE PAYS UNDER MISDIRECTED AND UNDERFUNDED REPUBLICAN PLAN

Because the Republican plan is underfunded, every consumer with an analog television will pay – some could pay \$20, others could pay \$60. The Republican plan provides only \$830 million, which means only 20 million coupons will be available to cover 73 million television sets that need a converter box. Even if boxes cost as low as \$60, those lucky few who get a coupon will still have to pay \$20 for each box.

The Republican plan is also misdirected. Once consumers complete and submit an application, they will receive a coupon that can be used toward the price of a converter box, but only if they are one of the first ten million households to cash it in. The plan is first-come, first-served so there is no guarantee that those who need help most will be covered. When the money runs out, you're out of luck. Homes most reliant on over-the-air broadcasts may not get coupons while vacation homes could.

ALL AFFECTED CONSUMERS WILL BE COVERED UNDER DEMOCRATIC PLAN

Under the Democratic substitute, consumers will not pay a penny out-of-pocket for this Government-mandated transition. The substitute provides households with a voucher redeemable for up to two free converter boxes. There is no application process – vouchers will be mailed to every household to minimize the inconvenience of the transition on consumers.

By forcing this transition, the Government is expected to receive at least \$10 billion. We will have more than sufficient funds to cover the \$3.5 to \$4 billion expected cost of our program. Since the Government is accelerating this transition, it is only fair that the Government bears the costs. Funds from the sale of the public spectrum should be used for something that benefits all of the public, not just the wealthy few that would benefit from the Republican tax cuts.

PUBLIC SAFETY

DEMOCRATS WOULD PROVIDE FIRST RESPONDERS WITH MUCH-NEEDED FUNDING FOR INTEROPERABILITY

Public safety can expect to receive \$5.8 billion for interoperable communications under the Democratic substitute. It is projected to cost at least \$15 billion to achieve interoperable public safety communications. The Republican plan does not commit a single dollar. Even the mere \$500 million the Republicans may add would leave first responders with little more than outdated communications equipment. We need to address the needs of our local police, fire, and public safety officials and not place tax cuts above public safety needs.

The substitute also funds an enhanced 911 system, and provides digital television assistance for translators and stations in New York City and along the Mexican border. Any excess above \$10 billion will fund broadband deployment in rural and underserved areas.