

February 4, 2009 - Rep. Slaughter Votes to Delay DTV Transition

6,208 Homes in NY-28 Are
Waiting to Convert to DTV, Congresswoman Slaughter Votes to Delay DTV Transition

Critical Legislation will Push Back Upcoming Digital Television
Transition to June Ensuring That Thousands of Families Can Make the Switch

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28),
Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today voted to delay digital
television (DTV) transition until June 12, 2009.

Under current law, all
full-power TV stations will stop analog broadcasts on February 17, 2009, and
broadcast only digital signals.
Households across the country, including thousands in Western
New York, which have an older television and no converter box,
will lose their signal on that date unless an extension is signed into law.

"This necessary extension will give Americans a chance to make the changes they need to in order to keep their TVs working" said Rep. Slaughter. "There are over 6,000 households in my district that are unprepared for the transition and waiting to make the switch. These are families that rely on their TVs for news, public safety announcements, and emergency alerts. Cutting them off is a major public safety hazard that we simply cannot allow."

Survey data released by the Nielsen Company reveals that, as of January 2009, over 6 million American households were completely unprepared for the transition. As of February 2, 2009, in the 28th Congressional District of New York, there are 6, 208 household waiting for DTV converters.

BACKGROUND

Unfortunately there have been several issues that have not allowed families to make the switch to DTV in a timely fashion.

The federal converter box coupon program, which allows households to receive coupons to defray the cost of converter boxes, is severely underfunded and currently, three million requests for coupons are unanswered. The

legislation voted on today (S.352) will extend the coupon program and ensure that these outstanding requests are filled.

Funding for this initiative is included in the economic recovery bill.

Additionally, converter box coupons expire 90 days after being issued, and many households have been left with coupons that could not be redeemed before they expired because many retailers did not have enough converter boxes on the shelves. To compound the problem, current law prevents consumers from applying for replacement coupons. This bill addresses this problem by allowing consumers to apply for coupons to replace those that expired.

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