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The Honorable Jay Rockefeller
Chairman
Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member
Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Barton
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Rockefeller and Waxman and Ranking Members Hutchison and Barton:

I understand you have received a recommendation from the President-elect's Transition Team to delay the digital television (DTV) date. I urge you to resist that recommendation. Not only is it unclear that a delay will ensure a smoother transition, but it is likely a delay would undermine the DTV transition by causing significant disruption and consumer confusion. In addition, delaying the transition will postpone the availability of spectrum critical for advanced commercial and public safety communications systems that will help achieve two important objectives: more extensive broadband deployment and interoperable first responder communications.

We understand and share your desire that the DTV transition be as smooth as possible. To that end, the public and private sectors have invested substantial time, energy and resources to implement the transition and inform consumers of the February 17, 2009 deadline Congress set in the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005. That effort is achieving its objective. As reported by the Consumer Electronics Association this past week, the DTV transition is on schedule, and over 90 percent of Americans have already taken steps to prepare. The CEA, representing the businesses engaged in the front lines of the effort to get the necessary equipment in consumers' homes, further reports that it expects the switch-over to be successful. Any delay, especially at this late date, would risk enormous disruption and consumer confusion.

The immediate issue is getting digital-to-analog converter boxes in the hands of consumers who need them. CEA indicates that an ample supply of converter boxes is available, and manufacturers and retailers stand ready to meet consumer requests for equipment. But provisions of the Anti-Deficiency Act are causing a delay in the distribution of the converter box coupons. This narrow issue has an equally narrow solution: Congress can and should promptly waive the requirements of the Anti-Deficiency Act and allow NTIA to distribute more coupons.

Delaying the transition will have consequences far beyond those necessary to meet the immediate coupon problem. In addition to confusing the public, a delay will slow the broadband deployment that President-elect Obama has repeatedly emphasized as an essential contributor to long-term economic, productivity, and wage growth in the United States. Broadband deployment is also vital to addressing the energy, environmental, and health care issues confronting our nation.

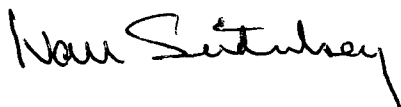
Congress ordered this transition so that critical spectrum could be freed for broadband deployment. For its part, Verizon Wireless paid the U.S. Treasury \$9.3 billion last spring for 700 MHz radio spectrum licenses, and we have committed publicly to make even more significant investments in building out the 4G, Long-Term Evolution (LTE) network in those frequencies over the next several years. LTE will facilitate the provision of mobile broadband services nationwide, including areas of the country that have few, if any, broadband services available today. Verizon Wireless intends to begin field testing and deployment of LTE this year. Deployment of LTE, however, can only be done if we have access to the 700 MHz frequencies. Delaying the DTV transition will delay our ability to upgrade those frequencies to 4G broadband for American consumers and have a negative impact on our nation's international competitiveness.

Delaying the DTV transition would also impede the deployment of advanced communications systems that are critical to our nation's first responders. On January 9th, four of the nation's largest public safety organizations sent a letter to President-Elect Obama expressing their concern about the impact of a delay on public safety communications. The lack of interoperable communications for police, fire, and other emergency personnel became apparent to all during the events of 9/11. A delay in the DTV transition would force the nation's first responders to wait still longer for the interoperable voice and data communications systems they so desperately need.

While the DTV transition has already been lengthy, we finally are about to secure the public benefits after an enormous investment of time, energy, and resources. The precise problem we face at this juncture – the shortage of converter box coupons – can be remedied expeditiously and efficiently through legislation waiving the Anti-Deficiency Act. Taking the far more drastic step of delaying the transition from the analog past to the digital future is unnecessary. I strongly urge you to continue working with all stakeholders to successfully complete the transition on February 17, 2009, so that we avoid the serious negative consequences which any delay would yield.

Thank you very much for your attention to this critically important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Naveen Srinivasan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.