

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

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November 24, 2008

Start: 10:05am

Recess: 11:40am

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E: GALE BREWER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Bill De Blasio
G. Oliver Koppell
Letitia James

A P P E A R A N C E S

Fran Friedman
Associate Commissioner
Department of Consumer Affairs

Karen Resnick
Deputy Commissioner of External Affairs
Department for the Aging

Jay Damishek
Senior Managing Attorney
Department of Information, Telecommunications, and
Technology

David Berman
Media and IT counsel
Department of Information, Telecommunications, and
Technology

Joseph Gordon
New York State Chapter Coordinator
Hearing Loss Association of America.

Patricia Lewis
Citizen

Joshua Brightbar
Policy Director
People's Production House

Darcy Gerbard
Research Fellow
Columbia University

Margali Rivera.
Representative
HITN

[sound check]

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Good morning, I'm Gale Brewer, city councilmember for the west side of Manhattan. We're going to try to start somewhat on time. This is the Committee on Technology in Government. And we are talking today about the conversion of analog to digital. This is a topic that I actually know quite a bit about because my district includes the home of WABC Television, I know we have Fox 5 here today, so I dare not even mention another network. But the fact of the matter is the networks have been hosting forums around the city on how one converts. And so since I have ABC in my district, not only have we been to the forums, but in addition my staff members are the people on the television forums who are doing the conversion, as sort of regular New Yorkers. And in fact, it seems like my whole district is involved and it's a pleasure to be so. But this is really important issue. I first want to thank the council to the community, Jeff Baker; Colleen Baxter who's the policy analyst; John Russell from Finance, and Kunal Mahatra [phonetic] from our office. So just

to give you some background on this issue, analog television TV broadcasts transmit information to TV receivers by modulating the amplitude and phase of radio waves. Digital TV, which is what we're going to, broadcasts similarly, transmit information to TV receivers through radio waves; however, DTV transmissions consist entirely of 0s and 1s or "off" and "on." What that means is that DTV transmissions can be mathematically compressed, which permit DTV broadcasters to transmit more information on each channel, enabling DTV to transmit in surround sound, multiple language audio, and high definition as high HD. There was a Digital Television Transmission, Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005, and I think none of this was really known to the public until we realized how quickly in February '09, we could be without television if we didn't pay attention. So included in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, which was signed by President Bush in February 2006, was the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005. And it set a deadline of February 17th 2009 for all full power TV broadcasters to begin

1 broadcasting only digital transmissions. So
2 February 18th, those of who have rabbit ears, as I
3 call them, will not be able to see television
4 unless we have the converter box, or cable. But I
5 want to talk specifically about the converter box.
6 The Act also requires that the licenses for the
7 analog channels recovered from the transition,
8 channels 52 through 69, be auctioned off and
9 allocates \$1.5 billion for a program that will
10 provide coupons to households for the purchase of
11 analog to digital converter boxes. The transition
12 will increase the number of channels open for use
13 by police, fire and other emergency responders.
14 And we've talked about this at other hearings,
15 actually. Out of the auction proceeds, the Act
16 directs \$1 billion to be put into a public safety,
17 inoperable communications fund, \$30 million to go
18 toward an NYC 9/11 digital transition fund, and
19 \$10 million for a low power digital to analog
20 conversion fund. I think one of our questions is,
21 "Where does all this money go?" For those
22 households, this is talking now about the
23 converter box program, for those households
24 without cable service, without satellite or
25

1 television with a digital tuner--I guess that's
2 what I call the rabbit ears, I'm not sure--the TV
3 converter box coupon program allows households to
4 obtain up to two coupons, each worth \$40, to be
5 applied toward the cost of buying a digital to
6 analog converter box. And I just want folks to
7 know that in forums, we found out that in some
8 cases folks are told that they can only get one
9 converter, one coupon for one box. The program is
10 administered by the National Telecommunications
11 and Information Administration, NTIA, which made
12 an initial allocation of \$990 million to make
13 available two coupons to any United States
14 household requesting boxes. This program began
15 distributing coupons on January 1, 2008, and will
16 continue until March 31, 2009. Converter boxes
17 generally range from \$40 to \$70, and the coupons
18 expire 90 days after the date they are mailed. In
19 one of the forums, we heard Rite Aid was giving
20 them out for free. We have so many anecdotal
21 stories you can't imagine. DTVs. As of March 1,
22 2007, all televisions imported into the United
23 States or shipped interstate, must contain a
24 digital tuner. The FCC additionally requires that
25

those selling televisions without a digital tuner, must prominently display a message at the point of sale that the device includes an analog tuner and may require a converter box after the transition date. To help consumer identify if they need a converter box, many broadcast stations have been conducting brief tests by turning off analog signals for a short amount of time. And I know that the networks did this recently for three minutes, between I think 6:58 and 7:01 one evening. Consumer education. The NTIA and the FCC, the federal agencies, are directly engaged in consumer education efforts for the digital transition. The NTIA has been focused on raising awareness of the coupon program by targeting five different groups: senior citizens, those who are challenged economically, rural residents, people with disabilities, and people of color. Both NTIA and the FCC are partnering with the private and public sector to help raise awareness of the transition, and have become members of the DTV transition coalition. The FCC is holding events and conferences, including a nationwide tour, that targets TV markets with more than 100,000

households, that's certainly us in New York, that rely on exclusively over the air signals. Here in New York City, on October 28, 2008, 13 New York City broadcasters simultaneously conducted a test that allow viewers to identify if they are able to receive digital signals on their TVs. Out of the more than 350,000 households that receive TV exclusively over the air, that means the rabbit ears, in my opinion, in the New York City Metropolitan area, over 6,000 calls were received to the automated response telephone number that was set up for the test. We can talk later whether that was 311 or something else, 'cause I know 311 was ready for whatever calls were coming in. Senior centers and libraries across the city have been provided with demonstrations and information with more talks scheduled. That I don't know about, so we'd like to hear more. FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein held public town hall meetings regarding the transition in Brooklyn. I know he did it with Congressman Towns, and Queens, in September 2008. And I also want to add that to the credit of the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs in lovely

1 colors, in Spanish and English, and probably other
2 languages, there is a sheet which is on their
3 website, and which I know they've been given out
4 to offices, including our district office. So,
5 another means of communication. So, without
6 further ado, we'd like to call our first witness,
7 and I believe it is Fran Friedman, from the New
8 York City Department of Cultural Affairs. So if
9 you'd like to join us. Consumer Affairs, sorry, I
10 was just, DCA, Consumer Affairs. And just to,
11 does DOITT want to go at the same time, Jay
12 Damishek [phonetic]? And the Department for the
13 Aging. So all city agencies, thank you for being
14 here, I'm glad you're so fabulously coordinated.
15 That's wonderful news. And we'll hear from you.
16 So Fran Friedman from Department of Consumer
17 Affairs? I, Karen Resnick, who is from the
18 Department for the Aging, and Jay Damishek, who's
19 the Department of Information, Telecommunications,
20 and Technology, or vice versa.

21
22 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Gale? Gale,
23 we're, I'm going to be starting.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's
25 terrific.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Okay.

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Whenever
you're ready.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Okay. I believe
I'm ready. Good morning, Chair Brewer, my name is
Jay Damishek, and I am the senior managing
attorney at the Department of Information,
Technology and Telecommunications, better known,
and easier known, as DOITT. With me is David
Berman, our Media and IT counsel, and the
coordinator of DOITT's outreach program for the
digital television transmission, transition, I'm
sorry. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
today regarding DOITT's efforts to educate New
Yorkers and the February 17th 2009 DTV transition
and its implications. Following my remarks, the
Department of Consumer Affairs and Department for
the Aging, will also be commenting on their
outreach efforts, after which we will be pleased
to answer any questions you may have. First I
would like to provide you some background on the
move toward digital television broadcasting, that
has led to this transition. Some of this may be a

repeat of what you said, but there's a little more that was left out, that I'd like to tell the committee about. In 1996, the United States Congress authorized the distribution of an additional broadcast channel to each broadcast television station, in order for stations to start a digital broadcast channel, while simultaneously continuing its analog broadcast channel.

Subsequently, Congress mandated that February 17, 2009 would be the last day for full power television stations to broadcast in analog. So, today, broadcast stations in all U.S. markets are currently broadcasting in both analog and digital, but after this February date, 85 days from now, full power stations will be broadcast digitally only. The reason for the switch is that it will free up parts of the valuable broadcast spectrum for public safety communications, such as those utilized by police and fire departments, and other emergency personnel. Additionally, some of the spectrum will be auctioned to companies that will be able to provide consumers with more advanced wireless services. Consumers will also benefit from the switch. As digital broadcasting allows

1 television stations to offer improved picture and
2 sound quality, as well as being much more
3 spectrally efficient than analog, television
4 reception across the country will be improved.
5 Also, through a process called multi-casting,
6 broadcast stations will be able to offer several
7 channels of digital programming simultaneously,
8 using the same amount of spectrum for one analog
9 program. For example, while a channel
10 broadcasting in analog on channel 4 is only able
11 to offer one program, a station broadcasting in
12 digital on channel 4 can offer viewers one digital
13 program on channel 4-1, and second digital program
14 on channel 4-2, a third digital program on channel
15 4-3, and so on. This means more programming
16 choice for viewers. I should've said channel 5,
17 actually, right, I'm sorry. So, so what actions
18 does a consumer have to take before the February
19 2009 date, in order to continue to receive
20 television broadcasts? For those who's
21 televisions are already connected to a cable or
22 satellite company, or for those who have
23 televisions with built in digital tuners, nothing
24 has to be done, and the February 17th transition

1 should be seamless. For those who may receive
2 their programming on an analog television, through
3 a rooftop antenna or, rabbit ears, as they are
4 sometimes known, certain actions need to be taken
5 in order to receive the digital broadcast. There
6 are three options available: connect the analog
7 television to a converter box that will receive
8 digital programming; connect the analog television
9 to a paid service like cable or satellite; or
10 purchase a television with a built in digital
11 tuner. If the converter box option is chosen,
12 through a program run by the National
13 Telecommunication and Information Administration,
14 part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, every
15 household can register to receive two coupons,
16 each worth \$40, to help defray the costs of the
17 converter box. Most boxes cost between \$50 and
18 \$70. If the new television option is chosen,
19 consumer should make sure the labeling and
20 packaging state that the television has a built in
21 digital tuner. It should be noted that consumers
22 need not buy a high definition television, which
23 is HD TV, to receive the digital picture. Now, I
24 just wanted to tell the committee about some
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recent updates to the law. As of October 20, 2008, a resident of a nursing home, intermediate care or assisted living facility, may apply for one conversion box coupon using his or her name and the name and address of the facility. Anyone may apply for the coupon on behalf of the resident, including a family member or employee of the facility. However, a facility cannot apply for a conversion box coupon for the common areas of the facility. And before this time, actually, someone in the nursing home could not get a coupon. And additionally, on October 20, 2008, persons who receive mail via a post office box may have the coupon sent to that box, but must provide their physical residence address on the application form. And also I just wanted to tell you about one more pretty recent, actually, update, and that happened on Thursday. Actually, the Senate passed a bill that would extend for 30 days the, that the broadcast channels can broadcast in analog for 30 days after the February 17th date, but it would only be for the, for any emergencies that come up, and any information on the transition. It would be telling people that

the transition has occurred, and this is what you have to do. And I think the House of Representatives has a similar bill. So, I don't think there'll be a problem with that passing. And now I'll tell you a little bit of DOITT outreach. While DTV transition is a federally mandated program, DOITT along with our colleagues at DCA and DIFTA, and other agencies across the City, has been very active in apprising New Yorkers of the implications of the switch, and we're pleased to brief the committee on these efforts. Specifically, DOITT is utilizing its significant public facing technology assets to educate the public about the transition. By phone, online and over the air, New Yorkers are being steadily informed about the transition. As you know, DOITT administers the City's 311 customer service center, a 24 by 7 by 365 government information and services hotline. In excess of 90 percent of the more than 40,000 calls the center receives daily, are answered in 30 seconds or less, with translation services available in 180 languages. DOITT has provided scripts for 311's call center representatives to

1 inform callers about the transition, how to keep
2 receiving television service if calls are affected
3 by the switch, how to obtain the converter box
4 coupons, and links to the federal government's
5 websites on DTV transition for further
6 information. Additionally, our call center would
7 be appropriate staffed and prepared for those
8 calls coming in on February 18th, the day after the
9 transition from callers wondering why are they are
10 receiving, they are not receiving a television
11 signal. The City's official website, nyc.gov,
12 also administered DOITT, has a prominent link to
13 www.tv.gov, as does the front page of the website
14 for the City's non-commercial broadcasting
15 station, NYC TV WNYE, at www.nyc.gov/tv. The City
16 also has a web page with an nyc.gov dedicated to
17 educating the public about DTV transition. Web
18 users searching for DTV on nyc.gov's Google
19 licensed search function, will find this dedicated
20 page as the first page in the search result, which
21 also links to the federal government's websites.
22 DOITT has also sent out two email blasts to City,
23 to all City employees, describing the transition.
24 NYC TV is also complying with the requirements of
25

the Federal Communications Commission to inform viewers of the upcoming transition. Accordingly, NYC TV is currently airing three or more public service announcements, and three or more text crawls in each of the following quarters of the day: 6:01 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 12:01 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., 6:01 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., and 12:00 a.m., 12:01 a.m. to 6:00 a.m., including at least one PSA and at least one crawl between 8:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. every evening, traditionally, traditional prime time viewing hours. Each of the, each the, both the PSAs and crawls describe the transition, who may be affected by it, and what those affected viewers need to do to ensure that they continue to receive television signals after February 17th 2009. NYC TV channel 74 is also providing DTV text crawls. On October 28th, NYC TV and many other television stations in New York, implemented a soft shutdown of their analog television signal, from 5:58 p.m. to 6:01 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: - - the time.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: [laughs] In this way, rather than--in this way, rather than normal programming, television sets relying on

over the air analog signals for service showed a message that described the transition and directed them to an FCC hotline. The City also recognizes that a senior's lower income residence and persons with disabilities may be disproportionately impacted by the transition. As a result of its recent expansion to include comprehensive human services information and referral, 311 also has specifically trained call takers with expertise in dealing with matters specific to these populations. Additionally, DOITT is coordinating a number of initiatives with other city and state agencies that serve these populations, and many of these city agencies, two of whom you'll be hearing from shortly, are conducting significant outreach efforts. DOITT through its media and IT counsel, David Berman, is also working with the mayor's office for people with disabilities, the New York City Housing Authority, Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Department of Small Services, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and in fact Councilmember Brewer's office, to conduct outreach to its residents. DOITT is also working with the New York City Department of

Education to distribute pertinent information about the transition to all families and cities public, in the city's public school system, and with the mayor's community service affairs unit, to distribute information to each of the city's 59 community boards. Additionally, we have reached out to the New York Public Library, the Brooklyn Public Library, and Queens Library systems, and over 40 non-governmental groups, to arrange for a distribution of materials about the DTV transition and their locations, at their locations, sorry. DOITT has also participated in numerous community events about the transition, including those involving visits by the U.S. House of Representatives and FCC commissioners. DOITT stands ready to supplement these efforts to educate as many segments of our affected population as possible. I thank you for inviting our testimony today, and you will now hear about the considerable efforts by some other city agencies in this regard. And I thank you again.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Thanks, Pat, - -

I'm around. Oh, great. Thank you. Good morning, Chair Brewer and staff of the Technology in Government Committee. I'm Fran Friedman, the Associate Commissioner of the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, and I'm delighted to be here. Commissioner Mintz asked me to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you at your very timely oversight hearing on preparing for the digital TV transition. The run up to this digital TV transition reminded us a lot about the years long run up to the Y2K transition that left everyone holding their breaths about whether New Year 2000 would blank out all computers, but with one big difference. The hour for Y2K came and went, but hardly anyone noticed because guess what? Computers just kept on working. This time, however, everyone with analog TVs who have not taken the kinds of appropriate steps and measures you've heard about from the Chair and from Pat representing DOITT, will know that the hour has arrived when on February 19th their sets go blank. Much like the coming of Y2K, the run up to the digital TV transition has engendered, as Pat has already alluded to, a massive outreach effort by

the federal--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It's Jay
Damishek, not Pat.

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: I'm sorry, Jay,
why did I say Pat.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's okay, I
screwed up cultural and consumer. That's okay.

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Jay, I'm sorry.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I didn't want to
mess up your testimony.

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Don't worry.

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: That's what
happens when you d lib. Engendered a massive
outreach effort by the federal government, the TV
industry, local governments, business and
community organizations, to inform consumers about
those steps that they need to take to continue to
enjoy TV after the switch over. The Department of
Consumer Affairs has not only joined the effort to
inform consumers about the transition, but has
taken it a step beyond by making sure that New
York businesses are properly marketing TVs during
the transition. To this end, the Department,

1 which licenses electronic stores, conducted this
2 summer a compliance sweep to ensure that
3 businesses which still sell analog only TVs post
4 proper notices to their customers as federal law
5 requires, informing them that such TVs will
6 require additional equipment to work after the DTV
7 transition. DCA's month long sweep of 130
8 electronic stores, and second hand electronics
9 dealers, throughout the five boroughs, found that
10 more than 80 percent of the businesses inspected
11 were in compliance with federal regulations.
12 Noncompliant businesses were issued warnings, and
13 we have scheduled repeat inspections. DCA's
14 Research and Investigations Division has also been
15 monitoring advertisements for deceptive offers
16 regarding DTV coupon redemptions and for the
17 required disclosure for sets that are not equipped
18 to receive DTV signals. And I'm pleased to tell
19 you that our monitoring has not uncovered
20 deceptive advertising practices in this arena, but
21 we will continue to monitor those ads. In
22 addition to its enforcement efforts, DCA mounted
23 an extensive outreach program to inform both
24 consumers and businesses about smart approaches to
25

1 preparing for the transition, including an
2 extensive FAQ for consumers available in English
3 and Spanish, which Chair Brewer has already held
4 up, with detailed information about the transition
5 and options for preparing. An extensive FAQ for
6 businesses, also available in English and Spanish,
7 detailing good business practices and business
8 responsibilities. And of course all of this was
9 packaged as a feature on DCA's home page, called
10 "Are you ready for the DTV transition?" which
11 includes the two FAQs and links to the appropriate
12 FTC information. The FAQs were widely distributed
13 to consumers through mailings by our consumer
14 service division, probably by now at least four or
15 five thousand. And DCA's licensing division
16 mailed the DTV tips for businesses to all 2800 of
17 our licensed electronic stores by the end of
18 October. In addition, one of our experts from our
19 research and investigations division, joined
20 others on a panel for Councilmember Brewer's TV
21 show, which has not yet aired. I am hopeful that
22 DCA's outreach and enforcement efforts, in
23 collaboration with the efforts of our sister
24 agencies, and all the public and private agencies
25

1
2 and organizations, will ensure once again a smooth
3 transition to the DTV age that will become a
4 reality on February 18th. Thank you very much for
5 this opportunity to comment about our
6 contributions to preparing for the DTV transition.
7 And now I turn it over to Karen Resnick who will
8 tell you about what DIFTA's doing.

9 SPEAKER RESNICK: Good morning
10 Chair Brewer and member of the committee and my
11 colleagues. My name's Karen Resnick, I'm the
12 Deputy Commissioner of External Affairs for the
13 New York City Department for the Aging. And I'm
14 pleased to be here today to testify before you on
15 the digital transition. DIFTA has joined its
16 sister agencies, including the Department of
17 Consumer Affairs, and the Department of
18 Information Technology and Communications,
19 community based organizations, and broadcast
20 networks in a comprehensive citywide effort to
21 educate all New Yorkers about the digital
22 television transfer. As you know, beginning
23 February 17, 2009, many television stations will
24 broadcast in a digital only format. This means
25 that analog TV sets will no longer display

1 broadcast TV signals, unless they're connected to
2 cable, satellite TV, or to a digital to analog
3 converter. Like all the agencies here today,
4 DIFTA is committed to educating and informing all
5 seniors about the digital TV transfer. According
6 to AARP, American age 50 and over watch the
7 greatest number of hours of TV, approximately
8 five-and-a-half hours a day. To be sure,
9 television gives seniors access to important
10 information and keeps them connected to the
11 outside world. There are three ways for a senior
12 to prepare for the DTV transition. They can
13 purchase a new television set with a built in
14 digital tuner, subscribe to cable, satellite or a
15 telephone company service provider, or purchase a
16 converter box to plug into their existing analog
17 set. The least expensive option for seniors
18 living on fixed income is the purchase of a
19 converter box. These boxes can be purchased at
20 local consumer electronic stores, such as Best
21 Buy, Circuit City, Radio Shack, and typically
22 range in price from \$50 to \$70. The Department of
23 Commerce is offering every household two coupons
24 worth \$40 each off the price of a converter box.
25

This means a senior could potentially purchase a converter box with very little out of pocket cost. This summer, DIFTA alerted all of its community based providers, including its senior centers, case management agencies, and home delivered meals providers, to the upcoming transition. The information provided included which seniors would be affected by the change, and how organizations could be helpful in preparing their clients for the transition. DIFTA also added critical information to its website home page, including documents in various languages, and a link to the Federal Communications Commission's DTV website. As DOITT mentioned, seniors can call 311 and be connected for immediate assistance. If further technical assistance is needed, DOITT can transfer all callers to the FCC phone line that is available to consumer 24/7, seven days a week, with live agents available at all times. The phone line can accommodate requests in more than 150 different languages. Additionally, we hope to connect our senior centers to the National DTV Spokesperson's Bureau. DTV speakers provide senior center members with current information

1 about the transition, in culturally appropriate
2 languages. The speakers also provide material
3 seniors can share with friends and family,
4 detailing what needs to be done before February.
5 To date more than 66 centers have taken advantage
6 of this opportunity, and we expect that many more
7 will request a speaker as the transition date
8 approaches. The Department is also reaching out
9 to other clients in its programs, including
10 caregivers, foster grandparents, and grandparents
11 raising grandchildren. It's our hope that by
12 educating and informing all of our constituencies
13 that they will be able to assist seniors with
14 their digital TV transfer needs. We're including
15 DTV flyers in any request for information that the
16 Department receives. As an example, anyone who
17 requests a home energy assistance program
18 application will also receive information about
19 the digital television transfer as well. Our
20 walk-in resource center has information ready and
21 available for seniors and their caregivers. And
22 finally, we've been working closely with broadcast
23 networks to assist them in connection with
24 seniors. In particular, we've worked closely with
25

1 Channel 13 and WABC. This Friday, WABC will host
2 a DTV community forum in The Bronx at Lincoln
3 Hospital at 11:00 a.m. We're currently working
4 with the mayor's community assistance unit, and
5 WABC, to identify senior centers in the Flushing,
6 Queens area for the next community forum. In
7 closing, the Department for the Aging will
8 continue to work with its sister agencies and
9 community partners, to ensure that older New
10 Yorkers are informed and educated about their
11 options when it comes to the digital TV
12 transition. I believe we've taken great first
13 steps to educate seniors, and will continue to
14 build upon these efforts over the next 90 days.
15 Thank you again, Chair Brewer, for this
16 opportunity and your ongoing commitment and
17 dedication to older New Yorkers.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
20 much. I have some questions, but I appreciate
21 your information. And I know that everybody's
22 trying. I've had the opportunity to go to some of
23 these forums, so we actually have some direct
24 experience with people who are trying. One of the
25 issues is how many people do you think today in

New York City rely on over the air broadcasting?
Do we have any sense of numbers?

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: The number, the number we had from various federal sources was about 600,000.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Because I know nationally, the number that has been, according to, I think somebody, the FCC, the number of people who've already requested coupons is huge. It's a very large number, it's in the millions.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I have that number.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: What is that number? I'm trying to--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: It's 34 million.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, that's the one you gave me, that was just an amazing number. [laughter]

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I actually have the statistics again.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, that was true, I know you gave it to us when we did the Manhattan Neighborhood Network Show, Jay. For Jay

Damishek, what, I know you mentioned that 311 operators are ready to handle any of the calls. I'm wondering if anybody called during the soft turnoff, and how that went.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: You know, I don't have any of the numbers of that, but I know we did prepare the 311 call center representatives. You know, we informed them that this is coming. But they do have two scripts that they deal with on, for the reg--you know, on the regular, on a regular basis, when, on DTV transition. So they could've used either one of those scripts for the--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: --for that. But
I can get you numbers if you like.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright, just, just curious.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: We'll try, we
can try to do that.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And what are the two scripts? One for cable, one for--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: One is, one is
for the transition itself, and one is for the

couple program.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so those are the two.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Let me ask you a question, because we do have people from my neighborhood who have been calling, and this is not just 311, but to the FCC, or to, I guess it's the NTIA, whatever the federal agency is. And when people call requesting a converter box coupon, if they have a second television, which this is what some people have, one being cable and one being what I call rabbit ears. So obviously they would need the coupon for the rabbit ears. But I think they're being told that because they already have cable as their primary television, even though I don't know what a primary television is, if you have two televisions, they are being told that they are ineligible for the \$40 coupon. So, I don't know if you've heard that, or how we would handle that. In other words, I think there are some glitches, not with the City of New York, but the federal.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I haven't heard

1
2 that, but on the application itself, they do ask
3 whether you have cable TV, like a separate cable
4 TV, so--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Right,
6 I think I--

7 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: --I assume they
8 ask that question, I guess maybe to, to say you
9 can't have a coupon.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I know, but
11 it's our understanding that that shouldn't be a
12 barrier. That's something to look at, because
13 that's what people are being told. I just know
14 that because we've had, many people from my office
15 have been going to these forums, and people raise
16 their hand in the audience, and tell us what
17 they've been told. I think much thanks to the
18 work that DIFTA's been doing, and DCA, people are
19 getting educated. So they're starting to call for
20 coupons and that's what they're being told. So
21 that's a problem. Second problem is seniors,
22 particular, we got a call the other day from
23 somebody who had done the appropriate, she'd
24 gotten the box, but she had no idea how to hook it
25 up. Now, I understand, 'cause I'm one of these,

1
2 Chair of the Technology Committee and can't do a
3 darn thing when it actually comes. So, the
4 question is, is there any help for someone? We
5 really had to send somebody, we actually sent
6 somebody from my office to her apartment to hook
7 it up. There was nobody else to call. So I'm
8 just wondering how do you deal with this.

9 Obviously, some seniors you have to call the
10 super, or you, you know, they're improvisation
11 ways in which we handle everything in New York,
12 from the light bulb to the connection. But I'm
13 wondering if DIFTA's getting these calls, how
14 you're handling it, because with all due respect,
15 you get the box, I know you're supposed to be able
16 to follow the colored wires and so on and so
17 forth, but it's not easy for everyone. So is that
18 something that you're looking at?

19 SPEAKER RESNICK: We, we don't yet
20 have a systemic response to that, 'cause we don't
21 have the staffing that would be able to go into
22 each and every home to help individuals. But we
23 too are concerned about that, and we are meeting
24 with community based organizations to see if we
25 can identify--Or, we have some, for example, some

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home repair--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It seems to me
that Met Council's handyman could help--

SPEAKER RESNICK: Contracts - -
exactly. So, those are limited in scope, but we
do have several agencies that are funded for
handyman type services, and we're going to see if
we can arrange for in person help.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 'Cause they
need more funding, Karen, that's the only little
problem.

SPEAKER RESNICK: I, I understand
that.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Since I've
just come from a funding discussion with them.
So, is that something that, let me ask you about
this funding issue. When I read the briefing
paper, I'm wondering if you could help me. There
are many pots of funding that have been allocated,
looks like in the millions and even the billions,
it's a national issue, for the converter box and
so on. Does any of that trickle down here? What
happens to all this funding that has been
allocated for this program? Do you know what I'm

talking about?

SPEAKER RESNICK: I have heard of--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Is anybody following this?

SPEAKER RESNICK: --different funding and unfortunately there's not funding stream that is directly going to the Department for the Aging, or to be able to share with our community partners.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But that's \$7.3 billion. That's what's allocated for this program, to the Digital Transition and Public Safety Fund, and \$990 million goes to NTIA to administer the converter box; \$5 million for consumer education. Do you know if our Wash--if Bill Daly in the Washington office is paying any attention to this, Jay?

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I, I know that
we - -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Another billion--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: --haven't gotten any funding for this.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah. I know,

1 but are we like asking about it? Or pushing it?
2 'Cause we must have the largest market as to
3 individuals who are seeking support. Alright, so
4 is that something that we could, I mean, then
5 there's the act, additionally requires \$300
6 million of the remaining funds go toward NYC 9/11
7 Digital Transition Fund, which reimburses New York
8 City TV broadcasters for the creation of a
9 temporary DTV broadcast system, that will be in
10 use until a permanent facility is constructed.
11 What's that? Okay, I'm just saying, these are
12 things that I understand are happening, and I
13 don't know if it's you or--and then there's a \$10
14 million for a low power digital to analog
15 conversion fund, to compensate low power
16 television stations. Well, looks like it's going
17 to the--

18
19 SPEAKER RESNICK: To the stations.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --the stations
21 themselves. Yeah, but if I was you, I'd be all
22 over the stations to fund handymen, or whatever it
23 takes, education, etc. You want me to do that,
24 you know I'll be all over it if you want me to.
25 But that seems to me that we should be following

1 every single penny. Also, the question of the
2 DOITT scripts, 311, do they walk people through
3 the installation of the, of the different colored
4 wires to be able to deal with this converter box?

5
6 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: That they don't
7 do. But they do give, the FCC actually has a
8 technical assistance number, where I believe you
9 can get that sort of help. And they do give that
10 number.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, let me
12 just talk about this FCC problem. First of all,
13 translation is not good. It is at 311, but we are
14 having a problem, non-English speakers calling the
15 FCC wait a very long time. And I'm only familiar
16 with the Spanish. There may be other languages.
17 I know you mentioned that the FCC has, I don't
18 trust the FCC, I trust 311. So I don't know, I
19 think you really need to check out to see what the
20 language situation is. Let me give you an
21 example. ABC has done, in my neighborhood
22 already, two or three fairly large forums on this
23 topic, as I indicated earlier. One was primarily
24 Spanish speaking individuals, with the New York
25 City Housing Authority. And I love ABC

1 television. The first forum we were directly
2 involved with, we hired the translation. And then
3 ABC paid for it, to their credit. Second time,
4 they forgot, and the entire audience was left out.
5 So, that's who your audience is often, today, 2008
6 in the City of New York, number one issue,
7 seniors; number two issue is language assistance.
8 So, no forum can take place without the
9 appropriate, paid for, language assistance. Guess
10 what, FCC's not doing it correctly. So people are
11 getting discouraged when they call because the
12 language assistance is not forthcoming in a manner
13 in which 311 is used to be forthcoming. So, I
14 want to say that, 'cause everybody's relying on
15 this FCC line. The other thing I want to mention
16 is the, are there going to be enough converter
17 boxes? Nobody seemed to be able to answer this.
18 I don't know where they're being made, if they're
19 being shipped in. Does anybody have any sense of
20 that in our city? I don't, when you check the
21 businesses, is that something that's an issue, do
22 you think, Fran? 'Cause it does seem to me there
23 are going to be a lot of requests.

24
25 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: We haven't

1
2 encountered that at this time, but it's something
3 that we can certainly explore.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and the
5 other question I have is, and this is my
6 ignorance, but I assume that the rabbit ears are
7 going to have to go into the garbage. Is that
8 correct? The current item that we put on top of
9 our television. And so the question is, is that
10 something that should be recycled? Do people know
11 that? Etc.

12 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Actually, I
13 don't think they do go in the garbage, I think
14 they get connected to the converter box.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

16 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: That's part of
17 the connection.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So that's what
19 I don't, okay, so in other words, nothing is going
20 to be, need to be recycled, as part of this
21 challenge.

22 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: The only thing
23 is the old TVs, if you're getting, if you go for
24 the option of a new TV.

25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'm going to

1
2 tell you, I don't think too many people are going
3 to go for new televisions in 2008--

4 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Right.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --with
6 everybody's challenge in terms of the financial.
7 I actually, at several of the forums you should
8 know the question was the reverse. People said at
9 one forum, about five people said, "I have cable,
10 and I would like to switch to the converter box,
11 because I can no longer afford the cable." So, I
12 think that's something that we should be aware of,
13 it's something that is a completely different way
14 in which we're approaching. Alright, the other
15 question I have is, you talked about some of the
16 community outreach events. Is that one per
17 borough, or how do you think, with the, how, how
18 exactly in terms of sort of grassroots work? I
19 know the website, senior centers, etc. But are we
20 doing, with the FCC, one per borough, or how is
21 that going to be worked on?

22 SPEAKER RESNICK: The two that I
23 mentioned were actually through ABC. FCC has met
24 with us and we provided them with all of our
25 senior center lists, and they themselves are going

1
2 out and doing that outreach directly. And they're
3 going center by center, not through borough wide
4 forums.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. And
6 regarding the disabled community, are they also
7 making that kind of effort? 'Cause I know that
8 people will testify from the community leader, but
9 is the mayor's office for the disabled doing any
10 kind of an outreach?

11 SPEAKER RESNICK: I don't know, but
12 I do know when we met with the FCC, we did talk to
13 them about doing outreach to the disabled
14 community.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright, and
16 also the--

17 SPEAKER RESNICK: So, I'm guessing
18 that they've been in contact.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and
20 regarding the immigrant community, Fran, what
21 exactly is Department of Consumer Affairs doing?

22 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Well, I must say
23 that we have not touched base with Moya [phonetic]
24 on that issue. We have, of course, translated
25 everything into English and Spanish. If the need

arises, we'll, as we always do, translate usually into Chinese, Haitian, Creole, and Russian.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: So, if there seems to be a groundswell of need, we'd be happy to do that, and post that on our site as well.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. It seems to be that's something that you would talk to the mayor's Office on Immigration Affairs regarding, right?

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. What, I want to go back to this not-for-profit issue, because I do think that we obviously, they would need some funding, but I can't, from my limited experience thus far, one of the issues, although it seems quite easy to connect, and to do the actual manual, I think that's going to be a problem. So, when you say we will be talking, we are talking, what does that mean with some of the providers, community based organizations?

SPEAKER RESNICK: You raise the critical question, of course, is funding. And at this point, we don't have funding and I don't

1
2 believe that any of the not-for-profits have
3 directly gotten funded through any of the pots of
4 money you talked about. But through our existing
5 resources, we have case managers that go in the
6 house to do in-home assessments, you know, can any
7 of them potentially help with wiring?

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And did you
9 talk to any of the networks to perhaps support you
10 in this effort?

11 SPEAKER RESNICK: I don't believe
12 that we have, but--

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Would that be
14 not a suggestion?

15 SPEAKER RESNICK: That's an
16 excellent suggestion.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I can
18 promise you that they were dying to make sure--

19 SPEAKER RESNICK: That everybody's
20 connected.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --that
22 everybody is hooked up. And so I would suggest
23 that that's where I would pay for all of my
24 handymen, or handywomen. Immediately. What are
25 the--the other question I have is regarding how

you make sure that the public, in addition to this major amount of outreach, are you, does it, how, do you know when the networks are doing their outreach? Do they coordinate with you so that you have some sense? The reason I ask is, when you mentioned DOITT and the work that's going on in terms of the crawler, was that just on channel 74, or was that also on your broadcast channel?

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: It was also on the broadcast channel.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 'Cause people
who can't see channel 74--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Right, right.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: - who have
broadcast abilities only.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: On WNYE, also.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, okay.

And have you gotten any, do you know, you're going to let us know if you've gotten 311 calls in general?

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Definitely, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. We've been joined by Councilmember Bill De Blasio, thank

1
2 you very much. What is the feeling from the
3 Department of Consumer Affairs about how people
4 are getting treated? I know you mentioned that 80
5 percent of your businesses are complying. How do
6 you continue to check on that? Because I think
7 most of the requests have not come in yet. People
8 will do as I do, "Last Minute Gale." So, I'm just
9 thinking that's what's going to happen. So how
10 are you planning to work with your businesses
11 between now and February.

12 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Well, of course
13 we're going back to the businesses to whom we
14 issued warnings who were not in compliance. And I
15 think we'll get a good read from our inspectors on
16 their usual beats, to see if there seems to be a
17 change in compliance in general. If we see that
18 there is, we'll just simply do another sweep.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

20 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Well before,
21 well before February.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And how does
23 it work, I hope the businesses don't do that, and
24 I think most of our businesses don't, but if the
25 coupon is \$40, and if the box costs somewhere a

1
2 little bit above that, will those prices be jacked
3 up as we get closer? Or that's something that you
4 monitor? How does that work in terms of a
5 consumer education issue?

6 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Unfortunately,
7 we have no control over pricing. Our concern is
8 that whatever they charge, they have to post
9 accurately. And we would hope, I mean, if you
10 read our, our business tips, we hope that they,
11 they will not do that. But we can't, we can't
12 control that, unfortunately.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Do you have
14 any sense that all of these boxes are competitive?
15 Are some of them free? Cost \$40, or was it your
16 experience that all of them cost a bit more?

17 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Our sense was
18 that there was indeed a range. As you had
19 indicated from the \$40 up to, we saw as much as
20 \$75, actually. So there is that range.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. And
22 will you be doing some, maybe press conferences,
23 to be able to alert the public, in addition to
24 what you're doing, vis-à-vis the materials on the
25 website and so on and so forth? So that people

1 have a sense of what's going o?

2
3 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: We're going to
4 talk about that, absolutely, thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, 'cause
6 that would be something that I think in different
7 languages, would make a big difference. I mean,
8 if there really is this number of 300, I'm sorry,
9 600,000 households in the City of New York, who
10 need to be changed from the current rabbit ears to
11 a new box, that's quite a lot, that's a lot of
12 folks.

13 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: It is.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And it's
15 definitely, how are you working with the Housing
16 Authority was my other question, specifically,
17 because it's my experience that for a whole series
18 of reasons, the Housing Authority, with its, you
19 know, 450,000 residents, there are a lot of people
20 there, who may or may not, but may have the rabbit
21 ears. And how are you working specifically with
22 the Housing Authority?

23 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: We have not yet
24 reached out to NYCHA, although we have many
25 opportunities because of our Office of Financial

1
2 Empowerment. So what we're going to do, or what,
3 rather what we can do, is include our DTV
4 information in the packets that we're already
5 supplying NYCHA on debt reduction and other OFE
6 kinds of issues.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 'Cause they
8 also have a wonderful housing journal--

9 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Right, right.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --which would
11 be another place to do it.

12 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Excellent.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And every
14 single, it seems to me that every single NYCHA, as
15 you know, has a tenant association. And this--

16 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Right, and we
17 work with them in other capacities.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, but you
19 need to actually really, with all due respect to
20 NYCHA, you need to do more than just send them
21 material. Because what you could do is have
22 somebody come to the NYCHA tenant meetings, and
23 talk. I mean, if there's really this opportunity
24 to have these DTV speakers, then that would be a
25 good place to have people come and talk.

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2 SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: We can certainly
3 coordinate with DIFTA on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go ahead.

5 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Councilmember, I
6 just wanted to tell you that, you know, our
7 liaison, David Berman, has actually spoken to
8 NYCHA, and the mayor's Office of Immigrant
9 Affairs, and the Mayor's Office of People with
10 Disabilities. And what we do, basic--he has boxes
11 of stuff from the FCC, they're all handouts, and
12 we offer them to the different agencies who can
13 come and pick 'em up and, and use them. And also,
14 as with regard to NYCHA, they did make, David did
15 get something in their newsletter about the DTV
16 transition.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

18 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: So I just wanted
19 to let you know.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think the
21 issue there is to just think a lot about
22 translation, and do things in as many languages as
23 possible. These coupons, once you order one or
24 two, supposedly two, but I can tell you there've
25 been a challenge if you want two, and it runs out

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2 and expires, then I think what we've been telling
3 people is ask your neighbor, who has cable, or
4 nothing, to order for you. Because that's another
5 issue is that people got all eager, and then they,
6 it's already expired. So I'm just wondering is
7 that something that is knowledge based on 311?
8 'Cause sometimes 311 has to be a little bit more
9 than what's on the screen. You have to like tell
10 people what the real deal is. Or how do you
11 explain to people what happens when the coupon
12 expires. 'Cause it does expire.

13 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Again, I think,
14 they explain it, you know, very briefly, and then
15 send them to the FCC site again.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Mm.

17 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: So I'm not sure
18 if they--

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You know how I
20 feel about that site.

21 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I'm not sure,
22 I'm not sure if they do mention the 90 day
23 expiration date.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, that's
25 something, again, for your information that has

1
2 already become a problem. Now, are you able, are
3 we able in the City, to include coupon
4 applications? Or can we just direct people to the
5 FCC? This is something that I should probably
6 know. In other words, can one download the
7 application, or can only FCC send it to you? How
8 do we actually get these coupon applications,
9 which is certainly the base of what we're trying
10 to provide for people?

11 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I can, I can
12 just tell you again, you can download it, I
13 believe you can, there's a number that you can
14 call.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, there's
16 a number you can call--

17 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Have it sent,
18 they can have it sent it you. And I think you can
19 have it faxed to you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

21 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: And I'm not sure
22 what else is left.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I mean,
24 I just think--

25 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Again, it's the

FCC.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I know, I'm just trying to tell you that the FCC's going to be burdened, and we have 600,000 people, and they're line is not quick, and people have had trouble accessing it. And I think a lot of the people who are calling are going to do so on the telephone, and obviously dissenters and people where there's a hub, people will be able to use the computer. But the issue is to use the telephone, it's going to be often what people use. So, I just think from Bill Daly in your Washington office, or DOITT needs to be in touch with the FCC to monitor how they're handling it. Which means, of course, we need to call or we need to be constantly vigilant. That's what I'm saying. I just want people to be able to get the most up-to-date information and not be hindered by language or length of--maybe they should learn from 311 experience. Alright, any other questions? Anything else? Alright, thank you very much, and we look forward to working with you.

SPEAKER RESNICK: Thank you.

SPEAKER FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

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SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright, we'll have Joseph Gordon to come. Mr. Gordon? And also Patricia Lewis to come up the, next.

SPEAKER GORDON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Patricia, do you want to come up, too? [pause] Well, then you can come up and you ask me questions. I think that's Patricia. And this is Joseph Gordon.

SPEAKER GORDON: Is that on?

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They're both here.

MALE SPEAKER: Thank you.

[pause]

SPEAKER GORDON: Good morning, Chair Brewer.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Good morning, Mr. Gordon.

SPEAKER GORDON: I saw you yesterday, at 12:00 noon, at 72nd Street and Broadway.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You had on a warm coat, and a hat.

SPEAKER GORDON: It was a windy

day.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yes.

SPEAKER GORDON: But, it was a good meeting. Thank you members of the New York City's Committee on Technology in Government, for the opportunity to speak to you today on your oversight meetings and discussions. My name is Joseph Gordon. I am the New York State Chapter Coordinator for the Hearing Loss Association of America. We are the largest membership organization in the country for people with hearing loss. The subject I would like to speak about today is my concern, and the concern of my organization, about the effect of DTV transition on closed captioning of television programmers. Digital television will bring many benefits to transform the television viewing experience. There will be better quality, more choices, more control over television reception. However, for the deaf and hard of hearing population, who number 31 million nationwide, the technology most beneficial and most important is close captioning, which are essential for an enjoyable TV viewing and comprehension experience. The Federal

Communications Commission has mandated that providers of cable television service, for example Time Warner and RCN, are responsible for the pass through of close captions. Providers of cable TV service in New York City must be prepared with technical and support personnel to assure their subscribers quality close captions will be provided before, during and after the DTV transition, and I emphasize after the DTV transition. We will be entering an historic time in broadcasting. The transition from analog to digital TV is set for February 17, 2009. So, there are two time periods, transition with analog and post-February 17th with digital. Whether it is before or after February 17th, if close captions are not properly received by subscribers with hearing loss, that is considered interrupted service, and subscribers expect to have their problems resolved promptly. Therefore, I am suggesting that all cable TV providers in New York City implement a closed caption hotline. Such hotline would enable reporting of missing captions or garbled, disappearing, or inconsistent captions, to the personnel, to be available by

email as by telephone, to solve these problems.

I'm sure the cable TV providers would want to

market this service and hotline availability

information should be noted on the providers

website in multi-statements. As I end my

comments, let me point out that many people

require or benefit from captions. In addition to

deaf and hard of hearing, who number 31 million

nationwide, there are other groups, for example,

those with English as a second language. There

are many places besides a home where captions are

shown and desirable. This would include airport

lounges, waiting rooms, hotel lobbies, bars,

restaurants and other large, noisy areas. And

sometimes captions have benefitted you who might

not want to disturb others, so the sound is muted,

but captions are put on. To summarize, it is

essential for deaf and hard of hearing to have

access to TV closed captions after the DTV

transition. It does not matter if programming is

analog or digital, subscribers expect and are

entitled to quality closed captions. The FCC

mandates the availability of closed captions. The

provider of TV programming is required to pass

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through the captions. Consumer complaints are made directly to their TV provider. The cable TV provider must have trained technical and support personnel ready to resolve problems during and after the DTV transition. A hotline available by email or telephone would help prompt resolution of complaints. If a subscriber's complaint to their cable TV provider is not resolved, there's a procedure to complain to the FCC. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. You want to say something?

SPEAKER LEWIS: Yes, my name is - - I am--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You're going to have pull the microphone towards you, Pat. Yeah.

SPEAKER LEWIS: Oh.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Or just use it on the--There you go.

SPEAKER LEWIS: Is this right?

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Pat, you're on.

SPEAKER LEWIS: Oh. Yes, I am a

member of community board nine, but my question is personal. I live in a building of 104 units of disabled and senior citizens, disabled persons and senior citizens. And for years, we have been held hostage to Time Warner. Now, what I am hearing is that with the new converter box, you will no longer need cable TV because--and also, there are the new digital rabbit ears. So what I'm thinking is that if you get the converter box and the digital rabbit ears, you no longer need cable for conversion. Is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: My understanding, and we still have DOITT here, so Jay Damishek can help us. Is that--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Well, I--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You want to answer the question?

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I was going to say--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Come up and talk on the--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: You won't be getting--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Come and talk,

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'cause--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: You won't be getting the cable channels.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, so explain that. I, go ahead--

SPEAKER LEWIS: Who cares? I'll be saving money. [laughter]

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But, what I-- Jay, what I--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Voice of the people.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Jay, introduce, introduce yourself again.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Just in case. Hi, I'm Jay Damishek from DOITT.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I want to say that, just remember I mentioned when we spoke earlier, that a lot of people do want to go from cable back to digital--

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Right.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --because they are nervous about the cost of the, of the digital.

SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Right.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Of the cable,

1 go ahead.

2
3 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Right, so they,
4 I mean, you, if you go back to the conversion box,
5 you will get digital channels, but, you know, you
6 won't get the extra cable channels.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right. So but
8 the issue--

9 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: So you'll have,
10 you'll have, your reception will be really great.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. So, the
12 issue would be then, for those who call the FCC,
13 though, and they are listed as cable--

14 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Yeah, right.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Will they be
16 able to get the converter box? That's an issue,
17 right?

18 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so that
20 needs to be addressed. So, Pat Lewis, this is the
21 issue, is that you would be great for you to be a
22 test case. So, you need to call the number that
23 we will get to you, to see if you can get a
24 converter box coupon.

25 SPEAKER LEWIS: Alright.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And then if you want to go back to just digital television, that's your basic television stations, not cable, to be sure that you can still get that coupon. That's something that I think has been a challenge and a problem. But we need to address that. And then if you have a problem, you call 311 or you call us and we will solve it.

SPEAKER LEWIS: Oh, alright.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay?

SPEAKER LEWIS: One thing also I'd like to know, is--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Jay, hold on, one second, because I have a--

SPEAKER LEWIS: Being that there's a range in prices of the converter box, is a technology old saying, because in my neighborhood, Duane Reed on 125th Street is selling 'em for \$19 over the \$40. Now, you were, you were saying, so downtown, I presume, it would be \$30 over the \$40.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think the answer is you can certainly go to Duane Reed with your coupon and get it for \$19. I'd also heard that Rite Aid was doing it for \$40. There's a

1
2 mixture of prices and we heard earlier from the
3 Department of Consumer Affairs that we have no say
4 as consumers over the cost. We have to be
5 educated consumers and go where it's least
6 expensive.

7 SPEAKER LEWIS: Yeah, but what I'm
8 saying, Councilwoman Brewer, is, being that you
9 have a range of prices, is the technology inside
10 the box--

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Is the quality
12 the same?

13 SPEAKER LEWIS: --all the same?

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Do you know
15 the answer? We don't know the answer to that.

16 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: I don't know the
17 answer to that.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It's a good
19 question. I think what we should do is, after we
20 should talk to the Department of Consumer Affairs
21 and get that clarified. Good question. Okay?
22 The other question we have for DOITT is what is
23 the issue, if there is one, regarding the concern
24 of Mr. Gordon, which is to be sure that there's
25 captioning, closed caption. Is that something

1
2 that will change in any--We assume not, but we're
3 concerned.

4 SPEAKER LEWIS: No. And actually,
5 if I am, and I remember correctly, the, the law
6 mandates that there be closed captioning for the
7 new digital.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I think
9 that's, again, something that we need to monitor
10 very carefully, right, Mr. Gordon, that's your
11 concern? Okay.

12 SPEAKER GORDON: It should be
13 monitored, and it is correct to say that the FCC
14 regulations that came out at the time of the
15 converter box, it did specify that their mandate
16 to provide captions during analog will also apply
17 during the digital transition and after the
18 digital transition.

19 SPEAKER DAMISHEK: Right. Thank
20 you all very much. Thank you, and Ms. Lewis,
21 we'll be, good questions, we'll be back in touch.
22 The next speaker, we'll do a panel of three,
23 Joshua Brightbar from the People's Production
24 House; Darcy Gerbard from Columbia University; and
25 HITN, Mr. Rivera. [pause] Ms. Rivera, sorry.

1
2 Yeah. Oh, and we, we are very honored to have
3 Oliver Koppell, member of this committee, joining
4 us. Sorry. Whoever would like to begin, go right
5 ahead.

6 SPEAKER GERBARD: Is this on?

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It is.

8 SPEAKER GERBARD: My name's Darcy
9 Gerbard, I'm a senior fellow at the Columbia
10 Institute for Tele-information at Columbia
11 University. I'm not representing the University
12 or the Center today, but I have been working in
13 research in digital television since 1997. I have
14 my second book on this subject coming out this
15 year. And you're already aware of the conference
16 we're doing on December 12th, and you're of course
17 all invited, as our guests, if any of your members
18 would like to attend. I wanted to bring up
19 another issue that I'm not hearing anything about,
20 and that is reception. It's true that the digital
21 converter boxes are going to be useful; however,
22 because of the multipath broadcast of digital
23 technology, it's very likely that there will be
24 pockets, who knows where, but all over New York
25 area, that will not receive the reception at all,

1 because it's digital and not analog. Now
2 everybody with rabbit ears was used to getting
3 ghosting in their images; that probably won't be
4 the problem, however there, the other is an issue,
5 and some te--I haven't heard anything about it in
6 New York City. The broadcasters I think are aware
7 of this, and the solution is to identify where the
8 places are that are not receiving the reception
9 and put booster technology there to make sure that
10 the buildings are not preventing those areas from
11 getting the transmission at all. It is very
12 likely, I know my husband's a senior level
13 engineer in this field, and a year-and-a-half ago
14 he bought as many digital antennas as he could
15 fine, and did some testing with them. And it was
16 very difficult to get those to receive the signal.
17 And it was difficult to get all of the broadcast
18 signals on one antenna in one direction. So it
19 may be a bigger problem positioning the antennas
20 than anyone is thinking about. Now the new
21 antennas may have solved that problem. I don't
22 know, but I'm not hearing that anyone has done any
23 checking or testing here. And I think you're
24 going to want to do that.
25

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. We'll ask questions when the panel's completed. Go ahead.

SPEAKER RIVERA: Good morning, my name is Margali [phonetic] Rivera, I represent HITN, which is the Hispanic Information Television Network.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We love HITN.

SPEAKER RIVERA: [laughs] Thank you. I'm here on behalf of our CEO, Jose Luis Rodriguez. We are part of the digital television coalition of 200 plus organizations that is proactively providing as much information and education to the public with respect to the digital transition. Our television network, which is educational, services the Latino community nationwide, and what we have done, we began in September, we launched a proactive campaign, not only on our national network, on our program to provide information, the program has a call in segment that airs daily, which allows consumers to call in with questions. What we have found is that while there is a lot of awareness, there are other Latino television networks, like Univision

1 and Telemundo, that have joined us in this
2 campaign with respect to information. But there's
3 still a lot of confusion. And so what we have
4 done is we have launched what are educational
5 workshops, in collaboration with community based
6 organizations, libraries through the American
7 Library Association, and churches through ComLat.
8 This allows proactive workshop to take place that
9 the ultimate purpose is to help consumers fill out
10 the coupon. Be it online, be it by phone, be it
11 by fax, but during the workshop, by the consumer
12 leaves, they have applied for the coupon. The
13 second thing that we're doing is we're working
14 with converter box companies to have converter
15 boxes present at the location, so that consumers
16 can return to the same location to pick up the
17 converter box or use the online process. This is
18 one of those that offers the more cheaper model of
19 the \$40 TR40. And our biggest concern, we're
20 doing these workshop, of which we have conducted
21 in New York about six workshops already, is one
22 that we have a lot of people coming with expired
23 coupons, and we're challenged with what to do. We
24 have asked the CBOs that are participating with us
25

1 to promote as much as possible those that have
2 extra expired--those that have extra coupons, to
3 come into the CBO with those coupons, so that
4 other members that come, other community members
5 that come in, can be given a coupon. The other
6 concern is senior citizens. We're obviously
7 working with that population also. And there is a
8 concern that they do not have the technical
9 knowledge, even though the process probably is
10 simple to people like me and you, but to senior
11 citizens it's an issue. So we're working to have,
12 we're working with LISTA, which is the Latino
13 Information Science and Technology Association, to
14 provide professional technicians that can actually
15 go into the homes and help these senior citizens
16 and other linguistically challenged consumers to
17 actually install the box. It would be great for
18 the City to take a look at this model, because
19 although we serve the Latino community, we feel
20 that these proactive workshops is something that
21 can work for all of the communities, particularly
22 the underserved communities. One of the
23 challenges that we have, which we could also use
24 some support from the City, is getting the word
25

1
2 out on these workshops. We're utilizing various
3 community based organizations, we're scheduling
4 every Wednesday at 12:00 noon the workshops. The
5 opportunity for consumers to call in live, we're
6 offering experts, the FCC every week has someone
7 present that can answer questions. The Consumer
8 Protection Board is also present. We have
9 representatives from Dish, from Radio Shack, from
10 Circuit City, with questions about antenna. So,
11 the workshops are a live, interactive opportunity
12 for the consumers to address questions and it's
13 going to be ongoing, there's going to continue to
14 be questions, there's so many different layers to
15 what can be done. And there's still a lot of
16 information to be provided.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I have to
18 wait. Hold on a second. Thank you. I say with
19 deference to my friends at DCA, you should take
20 over the operation. You're doing a great job.

21 SPEAKER RIVERA: Thank you. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
24 much. It's very, very impressive. And we will
25 work, perhaps some funding of this huge pots from

Washington, or from the networks, could be of assistance, in providing some of the CBOs, like LISTA and others, to do some of this work. So, thank you so much, once again.

SPEAKER RIVERA: Appreciate that.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Mr. Brightbar.

SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: Thank you, good morning. I'm the policy, my name's Joshua Brightbar, I'm the Policy Director for People's Production House, which provides media education to students in public schools, and immigrants and low wage workers around the City. We submitted testimony to a congressional hearing, to a Brooklyn Field Hearing of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in July. And I had wanted to bring copies of that testimony, but my printer wasn't cooperating. In addition, I wrote an article "Counting Down to the Great Television Turnover," which focused a lot on the antenna issues that the, my copanelist here was discussing. And that also I'll get you copies of later today. But I just wanted to focus on these comments a little bit on what I thought that this

body could do, and in general I've just seen a tremendous amount of effort, cooperation among non-profit groups and private sector groups, and government agencies. And while I think that there are a lot of parallel efforts that, you know, could be coordinated, in general, I'm very heartened by how this is going, and the fact that more and more people are getting involved as we move forward. Just also some additional--I don't see folks from, people from M&N or Friends of Thirteen, or Harlem Consumer Education Council here, so I wanted to talk about the work that they've done, that we've supported. In August, Manhattan Neighborhood Network hosted and broadcast a panel "Alternative Perspectives on the Digital Television Transition," which covered a range of issues. In September, the Harlem Consumer Education Council organized a very successful outreach event at the Adam Clayton Powell Building on 125th Street. And after that, Harlem Consumer Education Council and Friends of Thirteen convened a meeting in October to discuss ways to cooperate in community outreach on the transition. The Department of Information,

Technology and Telecommunications was there. FCC Commissioner Jonathan Edelstein called in. The New York Community Media Alliance was there, and I believe that their ethnic press members are really crucial for outreach efforts, working through the print media to get the folks that may not be getting messages the other way. And Common Cause New York and the Association for Maximum Service Television were also there, just to give a sense of the breadth of that coalition. To build on these efforts, the local government, nonprofit organizations and the private sector need to convene multiple forums around the City, as you were discussing. And just, you know, efforts like this, to really take stock of all the different efforts and who's doing what. And of course, you know, these can be scheduled at different times. A time in the middle of the day is good for seniors, but a time in the evening is better for working folks. You were discussing funding. As you probably know, the NTIA has, last week, gave out new, what seemed like fairly large grants to nonprofit organizations. The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging received \$2.7 million.

1 And the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
2 Education Fund received \$1.65 million.

3 Unfortunately, it's not clear, I haven't spoken to
4 these folks since they got those awards, but
5 doesn't seem like that money is being spent here
6 in New York. Maybe that's something that we could
7 join together and ask that they do. LCCR

8 Education Fund plans to establish digital
9 television assistance centers in seven television
10 markets, but that doesn't include ours, even
11 though Centrus and Media Research Firm say that we
12 have the highest quantity, if not percentage, of
13 over-the-air households, and people at risk. You
14 discussed other opportunities for funding, but you
15 know, absent federal funding, we definitely have
16 here a unfunded mandate for nonprofit
17 organizations assisting our members. And then
18 oversight, you know, you have DOITT here, and I
19 think that DOITT, also, while they had a great
20 script, I called at one point and thought their
21 script was great, they're not talking about the
22 antenna issue, and I do think a lot of New Yorkers
23 are really going to be facing that, as I have
24 faced that in my household. Consumer protection.

One of the issues I think that didn't come up before, is that not a lot of the stores are selling the \$40 box. You know, and the technology isn't all, is not all the same. There's some features, some of which are just like comfort in terms of the use of their remote controls, some of which are issues of analog pass through for low power signals. But really the most important issue is price and if the stores aren't stocking the \$40 boxes, then that basically means it's only, you know, folks who have internet access and are savvy consumers and get online to make the order that are going to be able to make this transition for free, barring having to purchase a new, or a new antenna. And yeah, those are basically the points I wanted to raise. And again, I just, you know, really commend the various agencies of the City that are working together to get the word out.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. I have lots of questions, but I know Councilmember Koppell has one. And I must admit, this panel is incredibly well informed. No surprise. Thank you very much. Go ahead,

Councilmember Koppell.

COUNCILMEMBER KOPPELL: I just wanted to ask the young lady who has the, done the workshops, whether many people came. Is this something, I was thinking whether we should have a workshop, or maybe more than one workshop in my district, but I, I don't have a workshop if people feel that they can acquaint themselves sufficiently through TV announcements and written materials and so on.

SPEAKER RIVERA: The workshops are very effective. We have to key in on the time in which we have them. For instance, if we're doing senior citizen workshops, they have to be done in the morning up through 2:00 p.m., because that's when the organizations have the senior citizens at the location, and it facilitates a lot of the senior citizens are there, are present. With the churches, we found that evening workshops can recruit about 80 to 100 participants, which is a significant amount. And then with the community based organizations, early in the morning, after most parents have dropped off their children, or prior at home parents, is the best time. So it's

1 a fluctuation of who's the market that you're
2 serving, who you're trying to reach. And we've
3 been able to key in on that in a way that we can
4 maximize the number of participants that come.
5 For us, the biggest challenge is that the
6 community based organizations are short staffed.
7 We're working with HACU, which is the Hispanic
8 Association of Colleges and University, to send
9 interns that have majors that are technology
10 literate, in the sense they could be able to
11 assist in that. If it wasn't for the short staff,
12 we probably could have more workshops. But
13 they're there servicing the community and this
14 becomes an extra type of program for them, and
15 they need additional staffing for that.

17 COUNCILMEMBER KOPPELL: Well, I
18 guess, I guess my question is this. Obviously, if
19 you send someone to a senior citizen center, the
20 seniors will be there, and they'll listen. I'm
21 just wondering if, if we announce that we had a
22 workshop in a convenient location in the
23 community, do you think people would come
24 especially to such a workshop? Or that this only
25 really works when you send people to already

1
2 organized groups?

3 SPEAKER RIVERA: I think if we're
4 talking about the underserved community, it's
5 going to be much more conducive for them to go to
6 a location that they already know. They're
7 familiar with their staff. It's part of, you
8 know, their normal routine. I think it becomes a
9 challenge when you indicate to them, unless it's
10 within a familiar community location, like your
11 local library, it's going to be difficult to get
12 them there. And if they're senior citizens, I
13 don't, I don't think that that would be something
14 that's effective.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Councilmember,
16 I can tell you that we had one in the community,
17 and then we had one in the senior center, and we
18 worked with the Housing Authority, which was a
19 location of people who often have just broadcast.
20 So I would say that you need to, it's much easier
21 to go where people are. So, the seniors really do
22 have broadcast, a lot of them do not have cable.
23 So, I think to emphasize what the senior center's
24 already doing, and then if you're going to do one
25 in the community, to work with the Housing

1 Authority, if you--I don't know if that's
2 something that is possible, but--You need to go
3 where people are because they don't really
4 understand that this is in their interests, until
5 it is right upon them, when they don't have--
6 You're going to have problems on February 18th, I
7 can tell you that right now. We have 600,00
8 people in New York City, who are under rabbit
9 ears, as we say. You're going to see February 18th
10 a need for a workshop.

11
12 COUNCILMEMBER KOPPELL: Okay, thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And we've been
15 joined by Councilmember James, who says, "Right."
16 And she has a question.

17 COUNCILMEMBER KOPPELL: Thank you.
18 I'm sorry.

19 COUNCILMEMBER JAMES: Thank you.
20 Representing downtown Brooklyn and part of central
21 Brooklyn, I can tell you, you're going to have a
22 problem. I just did a informal poll in my
23 community, particularly in public housing and in a
24 number of senior centers. The vast majority of
25 them still have rabbit ears, and are totally

1
2 unaware that their lives are going to change on
3 February 19th. And so I would urge you to reach
4 out to public housing and downtown Brooklyn, and
5 in central Brooklyn. Fort Green Senior Center is
6 where I hold a significant number of my forums
7 with Councilmember Al Vann. On average, on a
8 daily average, we have at least 300 seniors there.
9 I would urge you to start there, and then to
10 contact my office, I know, obviously, can tell you
11 where all the seniors meet. Some are recognized
12 under DIFTA, some just meet because they want to
13 socialize, and others do not, and there's quite a
14 few, at least 25 senior centers or senior events
15 that I've been to in the last five months.
16 They're totally unaware of this.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We had earlier
18 the Department of, for the Aging, and Department
19 of Consumer Affairs and DOITT. These folks are
20 from the community. And I think that we should
21 all be outreaching to the City agencies, to get
22 them to participate in just that forum that you
23 described. 'Cause we just had one with 200
24 seniors, very successful. You have to have
25 translation, that's incredibly important.

COUNCILMEMBER JAMES: So Madam Chair, may I suggest that we send a letter to our colleagues and also a joint letter to the appropriate agencies, suggesting that they hold forums in--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Great idea, great idea, we will do that. So I also want to ask, regarding this antenna issue, on the reception, I think it's a really good comment. My question is, if one gets the opportunity to get the correct converter box, and it's hooked up. And then February 18th arrives, and there is not reception, is it possible to add an extra antenna? Or how would one actually do the physical work? Would that be the network? Who would actually make that happen? How would, how would that take place? And also, would it, people will probably call 311, they will probably not call the FCC. There will be, we need to make sure that the City agencies are also aware of this, but go ahead with what you think, how could we remedy this problem?

SPEAKER GERBARD: I think the only way that you can remedy this problem is not with another antenna. It is, you could potentially put

1 a much larger antenna, which is going to be very
2 expensive, on the building itself, and allow
3 people to somehow connect through that. But
4 you're talking about a fairly large technology
5 cost there. I think the, it's not going to be a
6 matter of adding another small antenna in their
7 home. The problem is that they don't have line of
8 sight to the broadcast itself.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, yep.

11 SPEAKER GERBARD: And you can't
12 move the buildings either. So, I think the only
13 solution is to have the broadcasters put
14 additional cell sites in locations that cover
15 those areas. And that's not something an
16 individual's going to be able to do.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, it
18 causes issues within the neighborhood, too, so.

19 SPEAKER GERBARD: Well, it might.
20 It may be that on top of buildings, you can get
21 some of those placed. I don't, I don't know that
22 anyone--It may be, I don't know, 'cause I haven't
23 spoken to them, but it may be that the
24 broadcasters have already, in New York, have
25 already thought about this. You probably have

1
2 access potentially to the right people to talk to
3 there. Someone needs to form a committee, to look
4 at this issue and find out where it's going, where
5 these boosters are going to be needed, or--I saw
6 some of the TV ads that are trying to educate the
7 people about this transition, and they are touting
8 the fact that with, once the turnover happens, you
9 will get more channels and better reception. And
10 that's going to be true in a lot of cases. So,
11 the people that are currently using rabbit ears, I
12 think are going to, very often, have a big
13 problem, and not get any reception, maybe not get
14 as many channels. So I'd say a committee that
15 would bring in the broadcasters and do, someone
16 has to start ASAP doing some research to find out
17 where the, where those areas are that are not
18 going to receive this transmission. There are
19 likely to be quite a few.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you so
21 much. Josh?

22 SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: Yeah, and
23 Centrus' predictions were that a lot of those
24 areas would be in Manhattan, where there are
25 cavernous buildings. These signals are actually,

you know, pretty frail. The one at my house gets disrupted when the helicopter flies overhead, which they do rather often in Brooklyn. And on the ground floor, you know, when a truck drives up, drives up the street, it can be disruptive. The most important thing that people can do, is make the transition before February 17th, so that if they have a problem they can still get the analog signal while they're addressing this issue. So, 'cause the digital signals are there now. And, you know, that's what we did to my house, and we found that, you know, if we, you know, move the antenna from on top of the TV to near the window, the reception improves significantly. People can upgrade from plain rabbit ears to a powered antenna on their set top, and that can make an improvement. Going from a set top antenna to a rooftop antenna, can make an improvement. But, you know, now we're getting into the area--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Cost.

SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: Cost. And also access to your roof, not to mention the physical ability to go up there, now that it's November, heading to February.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, yeah, and also you have landlord/tenant issues that are endless.

SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: Absolutely. So, but these, you know, and the big problem is that there's no education about antenna issues from the federal government or from almost any of the outreach efforts. And that is absolutely one of the main problems that people are going to have.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Ms. Rivera, do you want to add?

SPEAKER RIVERA: Yeah, we, we are definitely providing as much information on the antenna options. As much as HITN is basically a media platform, we utilize that media platform to bring in the appropriate experts. And we have had about three or four workshops of which one segment is dedicated to the issue of antennas.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's great.

SPEAKER RIVERA: What I can do is the workshops are also online, for any entities that are interested in being a part of it, so that you can look at the workshops and see if some of

1 the information may be helpful to the outreach
2 that's being done. The other thing is, I like to
3 make a recommendation to the City that come Feb--
4 Post February 17th, we have presented to CAN, which
5 is the Coordinated Assistance Network, which is a
6 consortium of emergency agencies that consist of
7 United Way, Salvation Army, American Red Cross,
8 FEMA, because some February 18, it is about
9 disaster preparedness. And we presented to them
10 about coming up with a plan or initiative so that
11 they can become a central hub, particularly
12 because they're the ones that have that area of
13 expertise, come February 18. So I would recommend
14 that the City be in contact with them, because
15 they have such a great communication hub, and are
16 experts in that area. And we're working with them
17 to ensure that come February 18th, we have another
18 plan in place for those that are unfortunately
19 going to be left behind.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
22 much. I know that when DOITT testified, they
23 indicated that the Congress is going to have
24 another month of connectivity for those who
25 haven't gotten the converter box, particularly

1
2 regarding the emergency preparedness. So, you'll
3 be able, you know, you don't get any reception,
4 but you'll be able to get emergency information,
5 as the only vehicle. Let me ask you another
6 question, though, and Josh you could respond if
7 you want. But the issue also is, my understanding
8 now, if you have analog and you have digital, that
9 it's not full digital. Is that also your
10 understanding? Will it be possible that after
11 February, you would have a stronger signal,
12 digital signal, or is that not your understanding?

13 SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: If you get the
14 digital signal, you get the digital signal, is my
15 understanding. However, I, for example, can't, at
16 the moment, receive WNET's digital signal. But I
17 expect that I will after the transition, because
18 they're not broadcasting their digital signal at
19 full power at the moment.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, so
21 we're mostly channel 13 that's not broadcasting,
22 and the other network stations are.

23 SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: That's my
24 understanding.

25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Again,

1
2 these are all questions that we keep hearing,
3 because we're also like you, out in the community
4 talking about it, so you hear different pieces of
5 information.

6 SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: And, and you
7 know, and one of the other issues is that the
8 channels that people are broadcasting on will
9 change, that the broadcasters are sending their
10 signal out on, will change on February 17th, and
11 people will have to, who are watching digital TV
12 now, will have to rescan, which may be another
13 issue that people will need to educate folks
14 about, on that date.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Any
16 other comments? I think what we're taking away
17 from this, thanks to you and to the City agencies
18 and to those who testified on behalf of the
19 disabled community is we need some much better
20 integration of what the nonprofit is doing, and
21 the City agencies. And then we also need to get
22 some of that federal money, to help the nonprofit
23 community do more outreach.

24 SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: Yeah, and I
25 just wanted to add that, you know, that whatever

1
2 we do leading up to February 17th, there are going
3 to be a significant number of New Yorkers who fall
4 through the cracks of our efforts. So we need to
5 basically have two plans. One is doing as much as
6 we can before February 17th, and the other is, you
7 know, getting ready to respond in a rapid fashion.
8 As, you know, my friend who just had a baby was
9 talking about that fact, that, you know, you spend
10 all your time preparing for the birth, and then
11 all the sudden there's the baby process.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The kids, yes.

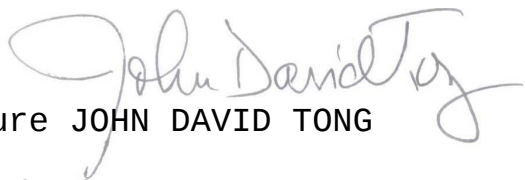
13 SPEAKER BRIGHTBAR: And it hits
14 like a tornado. So, we need to be, need to be
15 prepared for both the elec--both the election and
16 the transition. I'm not, I'm a new uncle three
17 times over.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Anyway, well
19 anyway, thank you very much, 'cause your
20 contribution was major, and we look forward to you
21 being part of the task forces that you just
22 mentioned, all three of you. Thank you very much.
23 I'd like to conclude this hearing, but add that I
24 think it has been very productive. I think, I
25 appreciate DOITT staying so that they can hear

some of the challenges that we face, and I think that everyone contributed so that we will be as prepared as possible. However, 600,000 people who are interested in moving from analog to digital is a lot of folks, and I think the federal government should be much more helpful than what we've listed and heard from today. And we will look at some of the specific issues that are applicable to New York in terms of line of sight, etc. Thank you all very much, this hearing is concluded.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JOHN DAVID TONG certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.



Signature JOHN DAVID TONG

Date 12/22/08