

## DTV TALKING POINTS

- a. As an industry, we are ready for the transition. Nationwide today there are over 1,500 local television stations on-air in digital. These stations are in markets that serve over 99% of U.S. television households. Clearly, we have done our part.
- b. Congress must prevent cable operators from leveraging their monopoly, gatekeeper status to withhold the benefits of DTV from the 70% of American households that receive their television signals via cable.
- c. Specifically, Congress should enact a strong, multi-cast must-carry rule. Today, 540 local television stations across the country are experimenting with multi-casting and the benefits they offer vary by community. For instance:
  - i. Over 90 stations are using multi-casting to make foreign language programming available. The foreign-language programming being aired ranges widely, including Arabic, Farsi, Mandarin, Spanish and Vietnamese.
  - ii. Many stations are using multi-casting to offer localized weather.
  - iii. Yet other stations are using multi-casting to offer 24-hour local news programming.
  - iv. Still others are using multi-casting for sports and other localized programming.
- d. Ensuring cable carriage of these services will allow multi-casting to fully develop and give all consumers - over-the-air as well as cable subscribers - additional incentives to purchase DTV sets, thereby hastening the DTV transition.

e. Finally, remind your Members of Congress: multi-cast cable carriage is not a capacity issue. Whether a television station uses DTV to offer one high-definition, digital signal, or multiple standard definition programming streams, the capacity burden is the same. In short, 6 MhZ is 6Mhz.

f. Congress should also protect consumers in the area of "down conversion," the practice of turning a station's DTV signal back into analog at the head end of a cable system.

i. Broadcasters support recent proposals that would permit a cable operator to down convert a station's DTV signal at the head-end as long as the operator also carried the station's full DTV signal. This approach would mean that cable subscribers would have the option of whether to view a full DTV signal or an analog signal. In short, households with digital television sets or digital set-top boxes would receive DTV signals; households with analog-only sets would receive digital signals.

ii. However, Congress must also make sure that when it comes to down conversion all stations in a market are treated the same by a cable operator, regardless of whether they are carried under retransmission consent or must-carry.