

**California Assembly: Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism & Internet Media
Informational Hearing Tuesday, June 24, 2008, 9 a.m., State Capitol, Room 437**

**The Transition from Analog to Digital Television:
*Issues for consumers and challenges to industry***

Testimony of: ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES COUNCIL, INC.

Presented by: Larry Deutchman, Executive Vice President, Marketing & Industry Relations

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Committee, my name is Larry Deutchman, Executive Vice President of the Entertainment Industries Council, Inc., better known as EIC. On behalf of EIC president & CEO Brian Dyak and the Board of Directors, thank you for inviting our testimony.

I have been an executive with the EIC for twenty-two years. EIC was founded by entertainment industry leaders and is celebrating its 25th anniversary. **Our mission is to bring the power and influence of the entertainment industry to bear on health and social issues.** We have been working for 9 months to help bring a human face to the technological revolution of DTV transition.

The EIC is considered to be the “grand daddy” and chief pioneer of entertainment advocacy outreach and one of the premiere success stories in the field of entertainment education. EIC provides information resources for entertainment creators, through innovative and time-proven services. We engage writers, directors, producers and executives in methods that promote accurate depiction of health and social issues and in so doing “*encourage the art of making a difference*”.

We also produce the annual PRISM Awards, a television special that recognizes the accurate depiction of entertainment shows that address substance abuse and mental health topics. The show airs on FX Network, and is the only show of its kind that has aired nationally for eight consecutive years in the history of television. By the way, our ninth air date is September 27, 2008. Recently, we distributed the show on DVD to over 11,000 treatment centers, including all facilities in California. Uniquely, the bonus material included Spanish and English public service announcements about the DTV transition.

Other issues EIC addresses are: sun safety and skin cancer prevention; human trafficking; mental health including bipolar disorder, and PTSD, diabetes, obesity, eating disorders, and many other life saving and health topics.

We maintain offices in Los Angeles and Washington D.C. Through partnership with the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, EIC was recruited to involve the creative community in DTV transition consumer education activities. EIC has developed communication strategies through its Entertainment and Media Communication Institute by recognizing the need to employ theories of risk communication, social marketing, health communication and informatics (web based) communications to the DTV transition education outreach activities.

In February, almost a year to the day before the transition deadline, EIC and the NAB gathered leaders from thirty of the nation’s leading consumer and grassroots organizations most affected by the transition. The event was called “Picture This: DTV and the Faces of Transition”. A list of the organizations is provided in the PICTURE THIS publication provided. We also involved leading entertainment creators and executives in the PICTURE THIS forum including: **Diana Diaz**, Director of

Corporate and Consumer Education Campaign, Univision Communications; **Kelly Goode**, Development Executive; **John Schneider**, Actor; **Margaret Tobey**, Vice President of Regulatory Affairs, NBC Universal; **Michael Winship**, President, Writers Guild of America, East; and **Mark Wolper**, Executive Producer, Filmmaker, and President of the Wolper Organization. The exchange between participants was a dynamic process, a brain trust that brought significant clarity to the need for consumer outreach and the important role the creative community could play to inform the public.

So what does the face of DTV transition look like?

Imagine you're an elderly 85 year old. You don't get around very well any more. Your primary link to the outside world – your primary source of company on a daily basis – is your TV set and the characters and personalities that come into your home. And one morning you turn on your TV and all your companions are gone, the screen snowy and full of white noise.

Imagine you're hearing-impaired. You rely on your link to closed caption news. There's a wildfire in the nearby hills and evacuations may be imminent, but you don't know about it. Why? Because your TV is no longer working!

Imagine you live in a rural area of California. You rely on over-the-air broadcast television for your news and entertainment... But now you get no signal. You think your TV's broken.

This is the face of those affected by the transition to digital television. EIC's role is to involve the creative community to ensure that those most at risk of not having a signal – older adults, rural residents, tribal communities and people with disabilities and others – do not lose one of their most important access points to information and emergency preparedness alerts.

The PICTURE THIS forum explored ideas to develop ways the industry can help to communicate the digital television transition to the American public by using television content and programming. The primary objective: to develop priorities and recommendations for stations, news programs and dramatic and comedy programming in conveying information about the transition.

Among the communications goals developed were:

- To inform the public that a change will occur on February 17, 2009.
- To tell people what will happen if they don't take action before that date.
- To tell people what they need to do to make sure they'll have a TV signal on and after the transition.
- To tell people where they can buy a converter box.
- To tell people where to go for more information.

Those in attendance developed suggestions for ways the media – particularly entertainment television – can deliver the message to viewers through storylines on TV shows. Actor John Schneider, one of the panelists, said the message is pretty simple: **"Friends don't let friends watch snow."**

What can the entertainment industry do to help get the message out?

The EIC's Entertainment and Media Communication Institute is launching an aggressive campaign to reach every show scheduled for this fall broadcast season with recommendations that will help viewers know what to do. For example we will be making suggestions to show runners, writers and directors to address DTV transition in storylines. We will be promoting **Entertainment Depiction Suggestions such as:**

- Consider incorporating a short scene in which characters discuss the DTV transition;
- Place messages in storylines about helping the elderly and disabled with the technical aspect;
- Draw on the comical aspects of technical difficulties to get a laugh from the audience, while at the same time informing them they need to prevent having to go through the same difficulties.
- Use celebrities as messengers;
- Consider tagging a 30-second PSA to your show, in which the star alerts viewers and directs them to DTVAnswers.com to find out why they could lose TV reception on February 17, 2009;
- Explain the beneficial aspects of the transition from Analog to DTV.
- Run DTV PSA contests to promote awareness, with the winning PSA to be aired on television. This will invite the public's involvement.
- Promote DTV transition information to schools, Web sites, and social marketing sites like Myspace and Facebook.

Using the recommendations of the participants, EIC has developed, in collaboration with the NAB, a "Picture This" booklet on the DTV transition. That booklet, which will be provided in draft form as an addendum to my testimony this morning, will be distributed by EIC to TV writers, producers, directors, and creative executives as well as news writers to enroll, engage and guide them in the effort to inform viewers about the transition through their shows. The NAB will distribute the booklet to its member stations for their use in developing public service messages and news announcements and news reporting regarding the transition.

Our challenge to the creative community is to "have at it" creatively...to think out of the box to communicate the DTV transition to viewers. This booklet will offer the tools to do so and to ensure that audiences continue to be able to see the programming they produce. The PICTURE THIS resource booklet will also help to ensure that come February 17th, 2009, our audiences will have continued access to important – sometimes lifesaving – information. Remember, "**Friends don't let friends watch snow.**"

Again thank you for the opportunity to share our work with you, and I assure you we stand ready to help you make sure that all Californians are prepared for the DTV transition.