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# Assembly California Legislature

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT,  
SPORTS, TOURISM AND INTERNET MEDIA**

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## **Committee Chair Statement on Informational Hearing** **The Transition from Analog to Digital Television:** *Issues for consumers and challenges to industry*

Broadcast stations in all U.S. markets are currently broadcasting in both analog and digital. After February 17, 2009, full-power television stations will broadcast in digital only. The switch from analog to digital broadcast television is referred to as the digital TV (DTV) transition.

For viewers who have one or more televisions that receive free over-the-air programming (with a roof-top antenna or “rabbit ears” on the TV), the type of TV you own is very important. A digital television (a TV with an internal digital tuner) will allow you to continue to watch free over-the-air programming after February 17, 2009. However, if you have an analog television, you will need a digital-to-analog converter box to continue to watch broadcast television on that set. This converter box will also enable you to see any additional multicast programming that your local stations are offering.

The DTV transition offers many benefits to consumers. First, all-digital broadcasting will give needed communications channels to police, fire and emergency rescue personnel. It will also allow for new wireless services for consumers. In addition, since digital is more efficient than analog, it allows stations to broadcast several programs at the same time, instead of just one program, with analog. This means broadcasters can offer consumers more choices. Digital also allows broadcasters to offer improved picture and sound quality, including high definition (HDTV) programming.

However, the conversion has brought challenges to all involved: Broadcasters, consumers and government. According to a February 2008 report by Consumer's Union, over 11 percent of televisions in America will go black when the transition occurs. Of those, 33 percent of Americans in households that will have no television signal after February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 were completely unaware the transition is coming!

"A combination of low consumer awareness, technological complexity, and financial incentives to sell more television and related services create a fertile environment for confusion," the Consumers Union report authors said. "For vulnerable populations -- such as the elderly or low-income households -- the potential for being misled, intentionally or unintentionally, is significant." The impact could be felt particularly hard here in California, where the greater Los Angeles area alone had 958,030 households with access to over-the-air service only, the largest single concentration in the country.

To help answer the many questions about the transition to digital television (DTV), the California Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism & Internet Media is holding an informational hearing on the topic of "The Transition from Analog to Digital Television: *Issues for consumers and challenges to industry*". At the hearing, we will hear from speakers in the television and cable industries, along with retailers and consumer groups. We are looking forward to seeing the Entertainment Industries Council's 30-page informational booklet, *Picture This*, which they will be unveiling at the hearing.

Now is the time for us all to get up to speed on DTV: What is it; what does it mean to me; what do I need to do? As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism and Internet Media, I want to encourage everyone to educate themselves on this important issue, and our committee hearing will provide important information that consumers can use to do so. February 2009 will be here sooner than we think!