



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senator Malcolm A. Smith Announces Federal Assistance To Ease Digital Television (dtv) Transition

MALCOLM A. SMITH December 16, 2007

In preparation for the digital television conversion slated for February, 2009, State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens) announced today assistance will soon be available for consumers who receive their television signals through antennas (known as analog technology). TV sets not connected to either cable or satellite – and those without a built-in digital tuner – will need a converter box after the digital transition occurs.

"Millions of Americans with older television sets will lose TV reception entirely on February 17, 2009 unless they upgrade their equipment," Senator Smith said. "Digital is a more efficient way to broadcast," he added, noting that DTV provides better picture clarity, improved sound quality and more programming choices.

To prepare for the switch, consumers can follow one of three steps by February 17, 2009:

Purchase a DTV converter box

Beginning in early 2008, consumers will be able to purchase a DTV converter box that enables continued television reception on an analog television set.

Purchase a digital TV set

Purchasing a new TV with a digital tuner will enable you to receive digital signals broadcast by television stations.

Subscribe to a television service provider

Have cable or satellite installed in your home.

The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has launched the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program to assist with the change in technology. As of January 1, 2008, all households will be eligible to request one or two coupons to be used toward the purchase of up to two converter boxes.

Beginning on January 1, 2008, New Yorkers can request DTV converter coupons by calling 1-888-388-2009. Applications will also be available at local post offices.

"Bear in mind, the converter option isn't for everyone," Senator Smith said. "While all households are eligible to receive the coupons on a first-come, first-serve basis, only those individuals who receive free TV through rooftop antennas or so-called rabbit ears should consider purchasing a converter box for their existing television."

The Queens lawmaker said that converter boxes are expected to cost between \$50 and \$70. Converter coupons are worth \$40, and only one coupon can be used per converter. Converters with enhanced features, such as those with a DVD recorder, are not eligible for the federal coupon program. For more information, visit <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/>

"Although February 2009 might sound like a long way off, it's not too early to start preparing," Senator Smith concluded. "Coupon-eligible converters will begin appearing in stores soon. The coupons expire 90 days after they are issued, so make plans to purchase

your box or boxes soon after you receive the coupons."