

There are other components of the bill that can potentially make it a smooth transition. Although an extension will cause delays, it is important that we protect our Nation's consumers and ensure that no one is left behind in this transition. The DTV transition is not something that is easily understood by all consumers and it has become evident that it will take more time to bring everyone on board. We must work to ensure that this important transition does not leave millions of consumers in the dark.

In the interest of time, I urge passage of this legislation but encourage the NTIA to continue work with Congress on resolving the program's deficiencies.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I speak in strong support of S. 328, and I also want to thank my colleague Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER for authoring this insightful resolution.

The digital television transition is an unnecessary burden to be passed onto the American people at a time when the pressures of day to day life are heavy and growing.

To assist consumers through the conversion, the Department of Commerce through its National Telecommunications and Information Administration, NTIA, division handled requests from households for up to two \$40 coupons for digital-to-analog converter boxes beginning January 1, 2008 via a toll free number or a Web site.

However, the Commerce Department has run out of funds to cover the cost of coupons and there are millions of Americans who have yet to receive the boxes. These Americans should not be expected to purchase the converter box without the aid of the government, seeing as the entire Nation is under extraordinary economic pressure caused by the recession.

Last week, President Obama's team joined a chorus of concerned voices requesting a delay because the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, NTIA, which is to provide education and \$40 vouchers for people to buy digital TV converter boxes, ran out of money on January 4. There is also concern that many people, especially poorer and more rural areas, have not yet heard that they will need a converter and a larger antenna.

Older homes can not be easily wired for cable. The house walls might be made of concrete, brick, or stone that is difficult to wire through. This has caused some local residents to opt for analog over-the-air TV instead of cable or FIOS. Other people have decided to only wire their living room, and still use analog over-the-air in other rooms. The old construction can also cause problems running an antenna to a window, roof, or attic. These older homes are generally owned by lower income families that are being hit particularly hard by the current economic recession.

On January 22, the Nielsen Company said 6.5 million Americans had not prepared for the switch, a startling number considering the Commerce Department's inability to assist these Americans in the purchase of the converter boxes. TV stations would face extra expenses, which is a burden that they also cannot be expected to take on in times like these.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the long-term effects of this transition will benefit the American people and support the eventual transition. Mr. Speaker we are in a recession at

best. Our seniors can barely afford their prescriptions and we are asking them to pay another 40–50 dollars for a convertor box? To some of us that may not seem like much but for many it is a small fortune. Especially for our senior population who may have only the television as company.

I ask that my colleagues support this legislation and give Americans more time to properly prepare for the conversion.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, it infuriates me that thanks largely to the incompetence of the Bush Administration during the past three years, we are presently confronted by the need to delay the transition from analog to digital television. That we are today voting on DTV delay legislation underscores the utter folly of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's arrogant confidence in its management of programs to carry out the mandates of the Digital Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005.

As the Obama-Biden Transition Team highlighted in its January 8, 2009, letter to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the inadequacy of the existing converter box coupon program and other federal programs meant to support consumers necessitates a delay in the date of transition to digital television. During numerous hearings in the 110th Congress, I asked representatives of NTIA whether they had sufficient funding for the DTV converter box coupon program. These representatives consistently responded that they did, even in light of a GAO report last year that NTIA would be unprepared to cope with a surge in consumer demand for converter coupons. We now know that there are some 1.5 million households on a waiting list to receive converter coupons and moreover that consumers, who apply for a coupon today, may not actually receive the coupon until after the DTV transition, as it is presently scheduled. I can only stress that had NTIA been more forthright with the Congress about the perilous reality of the coupon program, we would have been able to agree upon a solution well in advance of the consumer crisis that now looms before us.

While I intend to vote in favor of S. 328, I wish to take this opportunity to mention three brief, but important, points. First, I am troubled that S. 328 does not contain a provision to require monthly reports by NTIA concerning its administration of the DTV converter box coupon program. Given NTIA's poor administration of this program in the past, I feel it only prudent that NTIA be subject to more rigorous oversight in the future. I would add that the House version of this bill, which was to have been considered today by the Committee on Energy and Commerce, included such a reporting requirement.

Second, I would caution my colleagues that this bill's extension of the Federal Communications Commission's ability to auction spectrum gives rise to the possibility of waste, fraud, and abuse in those proceedings. I intend to work with the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce to see that oversight hearings are held following the enactment of this bill to ensure that the FCC is adhering to the statutory requirements of section 309 of the Communications Act of 1934, which specifies how the FCC shall grant licenses for the use of spectrum.

Finally, I am concerned about the DTV transition's effect on the natural environment, spe-

cifically as millions of analog television sets are disposed of by consumers. These old television sets contain such hazardous materials as mercury, chromium, cadmium, and beryllium, which could leach into the ground after these sets are deposited in landfills. I hope also to work with the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce to examine the environmental repercussions of the DTV transition and take such steps as necessary to mitigate them.

In closing, I remain committed to working with my colleagues in reaching a consensus-based solution to the problems associated with the DTV transition, especially to mitigate its impact on low-income, rural, and elderly Americans.

Mr. BOUCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BOUCHER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 328, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

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#### REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1, AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009

Mr. POLIS of Colorado (during debate on S. 328), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 111-9) on the resolution (H. Res. 92) providing for further consideration of the bill (H.R. 1) making supplemental appropriations for job preservation and creation, infrastructure investment, energy efficiency and science, assistance to the unemployed, and State and local fiscal stabilization, for fiscal year ending September 30, 2009, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

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#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)