



Senator
Bill Stouffer

DISTRICT 21

Senator Bill Stouffer – Cultivating Rural Missouri.

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***Just a reminder: the Missouri State Fair is in Sedalia August 7-17.
Hope to see you there!***

The Stouffer Report: Digital TV Is Coming

We have been hearing about the arrival of digital television for several months now. The deadline is coming up in February. Hopefully, this column will help to answer your questions so you will not have to miss any of your favorite programs.

Whether its "big government" or a "needed change," if you use an outdoor antenna or "rabbit ears" on your TV, you will need to buy a converter box. Folks who subscribe to cable or have a satellite dish do not have to worry about having a converter box. According to the Missouri Cable Telecommunications Association, 478,000 households in the Show-Me State only have an antenna and do not subscribe to cable or satellite television. That translates to one out of every five households in Missouri.

You may be asking why this move is being made – as many are. Right or wrong, the federal government provides several reasons. First, digital broadcasting offers a better picture. Television stations can offer more programming options, like 24-hour weather, so you can see current radar and weather forecasts on your TV anytime of the day. This will be really handy for farmers. Finally, the switch to digital broadcasting will free up the airwaves for emergency responders. You probably remember the challenges police officers and firefighters had when they converged on the scene of Hurricane Katrina three years ago. Since then, there has been a call for getting all police radios onto the same wave length. Using digital instead of the old analog band will allow this to happen.

The cost of a converter box is anywhere from \$50 to \$70, but the

federal government is offering \$40 coupons to offset the cost. In fact, they are giving two coupons per household, with a total of 33.5 million coupons to be accessible nationwide. You will need a converter box for every TV you have that is connected to an antenna. You can apply to receive your coupons online by phone, mail, or fax.

- Online: visit www.dtv2009.gov.
- By phone: call the 24-hour hotline at 1.888.DTV.2009 (TTY 1.877.530.2634).
- By mail: P.O. Box 2000, Portland, OR, 97208-2000
- By fax: send your coupon application to 1.877.388.4632

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has approved over 30 models of converter boxes for sale across the country. The NTIA also says there are over 250 retailers nationwide that carry approved converter boxes. You can find out where your nearest retailer is by logging onto www.dtv2009.gov. The NTIA also has its own website: www.ntia.doc.gov. According to their website, over 600,000 people have requested converter box coupons in Missouri so far.

There is a lot more information available at www.dtv2009.gov. The site features a page of frequently asked questions, which I found very helpful. There is still time between now and February 17th to learn more and buy your converter box, if you need one.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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