

January 29, 2009



Senator David Pearce – Serving Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon Counties

Website

Preparing for the Digital Television Conversion

As you are probably aware, February 17, 2009, is supposed to be the day that we make the nationwide switch to all-digital broadcast television. However, just this week, the U.S. Senate voted to delay the conversion until June 12, and the U.S. House of Representatives is likely to follow. Still, I thought it would be helpful to provide you with some information on the upcoming change, whether it happens next month or this summer.

One factor that is contributing to the delay is that the government program assisting TV viewers in buying the necessary converter box recently ran out of funding. The proposed federal economic stimulus plan is expected to provide the program with more money so it can continue helping families to get the special converter box that is needed to make the switch.

Currently there is a waiting list for the \$40 coupon that goes toward the purchase of the digital converter box (the boxes range in cost from \$40–\$70). Each household is eligible to receive up to two coupons. For more information on how to get on the waiting list and to learn more about the coupon program in general, including how to apply, go to: <https://www.dtv2009.gov> or call 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY). Here you can also find out where you can purchase a digital converter box. According to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, nearly 1.3 million coupons have been requested in Missouri and nearly 700,000 have already been redeemed.

So how do you know if you need a digital converter box? If you have a TV that receives programming through “rabbit ears” or an outdoor antenna and is not hooked up to

a pay-television provider, the first step is to check if the TV is digital or analog. If the TV is digital (has an internal digital tuner—your TV or the instructions that came with it should have markings indicating it is digital), you will still be able to receive free programming after the switch date. If your TV is analog, you will need to purchase a digital converter box (cable and satellite TV subscribers with analog TVs hooked up to their cable or satellite service should not be affected by the switch). For more information on the DTV switch in general, visit <http://www.dtv.gov>.

Why did the federal government call for a switch in the first place? For one, digital broadcasting allows for a much clearer picture, better sound and more channels. It also will help free up the airwaves for public safety communications.

To review, here are your three options if you have an analog TV that currently receives free programming:

1. Keep your existing analog TV and purchase a TV converter box. A converter box plugs into your TV and will keep it working after the switch, or...
2. Connect to cable, satellite or other pay service, or...
3. Purchase a television with a digital tuner.

KMOS-TV, channel 6, is one station that most people in the district can get by using an antenna on their analog TVs. The station now broadcasts in three digital channels that you will be able to receive when you make the switch to digital programming. For information on KMOS-TV's three programming streams, write to: KMOS-TV, Channel 6, Univ. of Central Missouri, Wood 11, Warrensburg, MO 64093.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. Because we are here to serve you, we look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

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