

STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER DEBORAH TAYLOR TATE

*Re: Carriage of Digital Television Broadcast Signals: Amendment to Part 76 of the  
Commission's Rules, CS Docket No. 98-120*

The 2009 digital transition presents this Commission with a number of technical legal and policy issues. At the heart of the Commission's responsibility is ensuring that American consumers continue to receive uninterrupted television signals. This goal requires us to work together- and not just as Commissioners, but as an entire industry. From cable operators to programmers to broadcasters to members of Congress, we must focus on how we can best effect a smooth and efficient transition. This item responds to concerns regarding the continued viewability of must-carry broadcast signals carried by cable operators. The Commission has made clear that such signals must be viewable on all television sets of all cable subscribers both now and after the dtv transition.

This item appropriately reinforces the requirement that must-carry broadcast signals be carried at as good a quality of signal carriage as all other signals. There can be no discrimination by cable operators between signals from a must-carry broadcaster and a cable-affiliated programmer. All have the right to the same level of viewability.

In addition, it is critical that those cable subscribers with analog-only television sets continue to receive digital signals after the transition. Requiring carriage of must-carry digital signals in both analog and digital formats for three years following the transition will give the Commission an opportunity to review the status of changes within the cable industry, as well as allow consumers to adjust to the upgraded technology. The world of digital technology is experiencing evolutionary changes. Developments in new compression technology, such as switched digital, allow cable operators to conserve valuable spectrum while providing quality video service. Other technological changes we likely cannot even anticipate at this point. For this reason we must remain flexible as we approach our rulemaking procedures. Most importantly, we must continue to approach this transition with a consumer mindset, understanding that viewers depend on television for vital news and information.