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## Consumer Federation of America

January 16, 2001

The Honorable William Kennard  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Chairman Kennard:

The Consumer Federation of America (CFA) continues to support the efforts of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to move forward on the transition to digital television (DTV) and to gain over-the-air access to digital programming for all Americans by 2006.

The CFA continues to take issue with the FCC's proposal to require that television sets over 13" be equipped with digital tuners. We have expressed our concerns on this issue previously in a letter to you dated November 27, 2000 and have highlighted them again here:

We feel that a tuner requirement for all TVs over 13" places an unfair burden on consumers, for a number of reasons:

- The increase is completely unjustified and an unnecessary burden on all consumers. It would impact low-income consumers most.
- Indeed, some low-income consumers who need a new television set but are unable to afford it may potentially be priced out of the market, and so be cut off from the most important sources of news and information in our information society.
- Cheaper options, such as digital converters, will be undermined by such a mandate, because the market for upgrades to small analog TVs will not be very attractive.

The Commission's most recent decision, to pull this issue from last Thursday's public meeting agenda, is yet a further indication that this FCC is attempting to pass an anti-consumer measure by the means least likely to call attention to the issue. In placing this

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issue on circulation the Commission is able to quiet the opposition and artfully deliver yet another gift to the broadcasters. By shifting the costs of the transition to DTV to consumers, the FCC allows the broadcasters to continue to drag their heels on the development of new, digital programming. Without more programming it is clear that there will not be a timely and complete conversion to digital television, and broadcasters will be able to hold on to the valuable \$70 billion worth of spectrum that they have been granted by the FCC well beyond 2006.

If the FCC does pass this measure on circulation, the Consumer Federation of America pledges to ask the incoming Commission to make the reversal of this anti-consumer action one of its top priorities. Again we take this opportunity to urge the Commission to refrain from enacting a costly mandate on the consumers of America.

Sincerely yours,



Mark Cooper  
Director of Research

CC: The Honorable Susan Ness  
The Honorable Harold W. Furchtgott-Roth  
The Honorable Michael K. Powell  
The Honorable Gloria Tristani  
The Honorable John McCain  
The Honorable Ernest Hollings  
The Honorable Tom Bliley  
The Honorable John D. Dingell  
The Honorable W.J. Tauzin  
The Honorable Edward J. Markey