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NHMC TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS ON THE DIGITAL TELEVISION TRANSITION

Los Angeles, CA --- Today, Alex Nogales President & CEO of the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) testified on the Status of the Digital Television Transition at the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

An estimated 21 million U.S. households rely solely on over-the-air television that will go dark after February 17, 2009 without a converter box. Congress has allocated \$1.5 billion for a consumer coupon program to assist Americans with the switch to digital television.

“Households impacted directly by the digital transition will be minorities, low-income families, living on a fixed-income, requiring a well-defined and more specific educational outreach campaign than the overall population requires,” stated Alex Nogales in his statement. “A more specific educational outreach campaign to this target population must be pro-active, consumer-friendly and culturally, linguistically sensitive. Appropriate outreach to disabled, minority, rural, low-income and senior citizens is essential.”

NHMC’s recommendations:

- A well-funded pro-active, consumer-friendly, and culturally sensitive outreach program needs to begin as soon as possible and should include a well-coordinated campaign that includes community-based organizations (CBOs) working closely with the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA), the agency charged with overseeing the digital transition.
- The money that is projected to be spent on the educational outreach program is not enough and should be supplemented.

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- Since a predominantly high number of Spanish-speakers will be impacted by this transition, bilingual and bi-cultural staff is essential. For any educational campaign to be effective it's not only relevant that the person be able to speak the language but also understand the culture.
- English-written materials should not be translated to Spanish as they are seldom culturally effective. Materials to the Spanish-speaking should be original and the appropriate place to advertise to Latinos should be carefully considered. For example, Latinos more than anyone else consume a great deal of radio programming.
- A two-phase program with an added burdensome requirement for those that apply later doesn't make sense and should be combined into one program without the certification requirement.

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The National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) is a 21-year old non-profit civil rights and advocacy organization created to 1) improve the image of American Latinos as portrayed by the media; 2) increase the number of American Latinos employed in all facets of media; and 3) advocate for media and telecommunications policies that benefit the Latino community. For more information go to www.nhmc.org