

In 2016, the National Association of Broadcasters, Consumer Technology Association, America's Public Television Stations and the Advanced Warning and Response Network Alliance filed a joint petition with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), requesting permission for individual local TV stations and television receiver manufacturers to adopt a new transmission standard that sets the stage for the next generation of broadcast television. In early February, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai circulated a proposal that would allow broadcasters to use the Next Gen TV standard on a voluntary basis. Chairman Pai said he hopes the FCC can issue a final authorization of the standard later this year.

Unleashing the Next Generation of Broadcast Innovation

The Next Generation TV standard was developed by the broadcast, consumer electronics, cable, satellite, motion picture and computer industries. The new IP-based standard represents the next evolutionary leap forward in broadcast television and would support innovative technologies such as:

- Visually stunning pictures on large-screen televisions with superior reception and immersive audio;
- Broadcast programming with multiple consumer-friendly features, such as interactivity and personalized services;
- Access to unlimited viewing of live local and national news, the most popular sports and entertainment programming and trusted educational and children's programming on mobile and handheld devices without the use of a broadband or wireless connection;
- Seamless integration of broadcast programming with other IP services and the state-of-the-art security that content owners depend upon;
- Advanced emergency alert information supported by live reporters that connects public safety officials with local communities;
- Datacasting that will offer a new broadband data pipe into the home, giving content providers another platform to distribute large video and other digital files to consumers; and
- The ability to geo-target news, weather and other programming to better serve the public.

Ensuring a Voluntary, Consumer-Friendly Roll Out

Like mobile carriers today, which are free to choose when and how to deploy new upgraded standards, broadcasters will have the option of choosing when and whether to enhance their current service by implementing Next Gen TV. This enhanced digital IP-based standard will create the bedrock for continuing innovation by the television industry for decades to come. The transition to Next Gen TV will be market-driven, and broadcasters' use of this new transmission standard would be voluntary without mandatory timelines for either broadcasters or receiver manufacturers to adopt the new standard.

No additional spectrum or government funds are required for the new standard, and consumers would have no equipment mandates. However, just as the current digital television (DTV) standard was not compatible with analog TV sets, Next Gen TV is not compatible with existing television receivers. To accomplish a seamless implementation of Next Gen TV without disenfranchising viewers, individual broadcasters choosing to deploy this new technology will continue to broadcast simultaneously using the current DTV standard through agreements with other stations.

FCC Action Needed

To enable the voluntary use of this innovative standard, the coalition's petition requests that the FCC:

- Approve the new technology as an option for local broadcasters and receiver manufacturers;
- Implement specific rule changes to permit local simulcasting, enabling the new standard to be deployed while the current DTV standard remains available to viewers;
- Specify that Next Gen TV is "television broadcasting" in parity with the current DTV standard, and otherwise conforms to its rules to permit deployment of this innovative new standard; and
- Favor a light regulatory touch by only adopting necessary regulations.

If approved, Next Gen TV will better align broadcasting's broadly-deployed, spectrally-efficient and free service with an increasingly IP-based world. Unleashing broadcast innovation will enhance the viewer experience, enable easier integration into a wide array of popular devices, and drive competition with other video and data providers, all to the benefit of consumers.