WASHINGTON - Television broadcasters on Monday launched an advertising campaign to fight a technology industry proposal to transmit high-speed Internet service over unused airwaves.

The National Association of Broadcasters, which is worried about possible interference with TV programming, said TV ads will air in the Washington, D.C. area throughout the week and print ads will run in several Capitol Hill publications.

The ad blitz is aimed against an initiative by a high-technology coalition that seeks federal regulatory approval for a prototype device that could transmit high-speed Internet, or broadband, service over unlicensed and unused TV spectrum, also known as "white spaces."

The technology coalition — which includes Microsoft Corp., Google Inc., Dell Inc., Hewlett-Packard Co., Intel Corp., EarthLink Inc. and Philips Electronics North America Corp., a division of Netherlands-based Royal Philips Electronics NV — said the devices could make Internet service more accessible and affordable, especially in rural areas and also spur innovation.

But the NAB, whose members include Walt Disney Co.'s ABC division and Univision Communications Inc., is fearful such devices could interfere with television programming and could cause problems with a federally mandated transition from analog to digital signals in February 2009.

"While our friends at Intel, Google and Microsoft may find system errors, computer glitches and dropped calls tolerable, broadcasters do not," said NAB Chairman Alan Frank, president of Post-Newsweek Stations, in a statement.

In late July, the Federal Communications Commission, which is testing the prototype devices submitted by the coalition, gave a failing grade to them, saying it could cause
interference with TV programming.

Two weeks later, the FCC said one of the devices was broken, which accounted for the results. A duplicate device sent to the FCC was never tested.

According to its timetable, the FCC could adopt rules for operating devices in the white-space spectrum by October and start certifying similar devices that meets its technical requirement. In any case, no devices would go on sale before the 2009 digital TV transition.

Broadcasters also said the consumer electronics industry and sports leagues, including Major League Baseball, National Football League, PGA Tour and others, are also joining them in their effort.

Jeff Willis, coordinating technical manager for ESPN Productions, said white-space interference has no timeline or boundaries.

"It can occur in the bottom of the ninth with the bases loaded or as the kicking team lines up to kick the game winning field goal," he said in a statement. "The interference from these devices will render our use of wireless technology unreliable for telecast."