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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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Before the FCC makes a decision on whether or not Comcast and AT&T Broadband be allowed to merge, I am submitting comments for your consideration. As a resident of Philadelphia, Comcast's home town, I know all too well what it's like living with them as a cable franchisee. Their monopoly here as caused hardship for their customers, and their refusal to fulfill their commitments to the public interest should raise a red flag to anyone contemplating making them the largest cable company in the nation.

It's ironic to me that the day Brian Roberts testified before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Business and Consumer Rights that they would not raise rates, Comcast's Philadelphia subscribers were receiving yet another rate increase. This rate increase was about 7%, which is way beyond the rate of inflation. Even subscribers receiving the most basic limited cable service saw their cable rates make a significant jump. As the Philadelphia Inquirer recently reported, Comcast charges its Philadelphia subscribers the highest rates in the nation. The local franchise authority allows for Time-Warner to operate in a small section of the city. A Comcast subscriber now pays about 45% higher prices than a Time-Warner subscriber for the same limited basic services. The rates are completely unjustified, unfair and uncalled for.

However, Comcast has put its money and power to creative uses to ensure that it remains the only choice for most Philadelphians. They have acquired two major sports franchises and those interested fans are forced to play ball only with them. Such heavy-handed tactics include denying direct satellite services the right to carry games, unlike every other sports franchise. They have also used their political clout to keep out any competition in their local franchise areas. Recently RCN sought to compete for Comcast customers, only to be denied a franchise agreement by our City Council with Comcast executives lurking over the Council's shoulders. Once again Comcast showed that it knows how politics are played in the City of Brotherly Love.

As a member of the Philadelphia Community Access Coalition ([www.phillyaccess.org](http://www.phillyaccess.org)), we have been urging the City to make Comcast live up to its agreements regarding their public access provisions. These public interest agreements are requirements the City requests of its franchisees in exchange for their right to provide cable services in the City. To date Comcast refuses comply with the franchise agreements and provide public access programming. All requests for meetings with Comcast executives have been futile. Their corporate strategy has been to shift the blame onto government officials or distort the facts when called upon to make public comment.

As a television professional and educator I know the tremendous influence the media plays in our lives. The public's right to have all issues addressed and to participate in

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civic dialogue is fundamental to our democracy. Comcast has done everything possible to deny us of this right. Their anti-democratic character has been bad for Philadelphia and should serve as a warning for how they will operate as the nation's largest cable operator.

In closing I ask that if the almighty dollar is the sole critia for the FCC's decision, then by all means grant AT&T /Comcast's request to merge. But if a healthy democracy for our nation is the objective, then I ask that you say no to the creation of a media giant that has the potential to destroy the rights and freedoms for which we have all sacrificed.

George McCollough