

I wish to express my reservations concerning the proposed merger between AT&T Broadband and Comcast.

I believe that if this merger is allowed to go through, in its current form, the public interest will be seriously harmed. I am a current Comcast broadband customer, and I am not satisfied. Their service is spotty, their attitude arrogant, and their skill/competance level is low. They are much more intereseted in extracting every last nickle they can than they are in providing resonably good service.

I signed up with Comcast in late December 2001. I knew that @Home was going out of business, but I wanted high-speed internet access, and it had just become available in my neighborhood. The service was installed and worked excellently for three months. The only problem was with additional email accounts. Comcast said they would not allow me to set up additional accounts (I was entitled to 5 under the contract), because of the upcomming switch from @Home service to Comcast.net service. I was told I would have to keep my Earthlink.net account if I wanted more than one mailbox. In March 2002, when Comcast turned off the @Home service and switched to Comcast.net service there were enormous problems. There were occasional internet access outages, but the bulk of the problems were with email. I expected switchover problems, so I worked with their tech support to iron them out. I didn't care about their email much, because I had email accounts with other suppliers. I accessed them through the Comcast internet service.

In March I was notified that Comcast would no longer offer dial-up access. Since I travel occasionally, I wanted to access my email from places other than my home. I was told I would have to keep my Earthlink account if I wanted dial-up access. So now I must spend an additional \$21.95/month to maintain dial-up access, a service Comcast offered, said it would continue, then changed its mind an cancelled.

In late January or early February I contacted Comcast about web hosting. I decided to try to start a business (from my home) and needed someone to host the web site. Comcast told me that I could not put business related things on my personal Comcast web site. I asked about business web hosting and was told they did not offer that service, and could not be sure when, if ever they would offer it. They told me I would have to contact a third party to supply that service. So I signed a two year contract with a web hosting firm. Everything worked smoothly until the middle of April.

In mid-April, I began experiencing significant email problems. Comcast's email was down a lot (nothing unusual) but I could no longer send email through my web domain. About two weeks later I could no longer send email using my Earthlink accounts. After several calls to tech support, and three hours on the phone, I was told that Comcast was now blocking access to email account that were nor Comcast. From now on I would be permitted to receive email from those accounts, but not reply to it. The only email permitted through the Comcast SMTP servers would have to be addressed xxx@comcast.net.

I find this outrageous. Comcast cannot provide reliable email service after four months of trying. They do not offer webmail "yet", because they cannot get it to work. Yet they have the arrogance to bloch access to other email accounts from other suppliers. So now, to reply to

emails from my other accounts, I must manually change the address on each email and save them for transmission on the few occasions that Comcast's email is working.

It is now May, and after eight more calls to Comcast tech support I can no longer use Microsoft Outlook (they claim it "should" work with there service, but it doesn't). I moved everything over to Outlook Express, the only Comcast supported email client. Tech support had me rebuild the account three times to no avail. Each tech told me something different. The last on guaranteed she had the solution, had me change my settings, then reset my password. She said it would take effect in 24 hours because they were having problems. Twenty four hours later it still didn't work. In fact after three days of outage, I reset the settings myself and began to receive email from my comcast.net account.

This level of incompetence is inexcusable.

While talking to the tech support people, I was told that for \$95/month they would restore access to my other email accounts. I was told this was a business package. I asked what it included and was told that the same servers were used, and everything else would remain the same, except that I would be given a longer lease on dynamic IP addresses, and I would be entitled to a VPN connection. Also, they would assign a different outgoing port to my email client that would bypass the Comcast imposed blockage of my other email accounts. This is also outrageous. A longer lease on a DHCP supplied dynamic IP address is useless. It is a gimick to make it seem you are actually getting something for your money. Same for VPN, since the VPN tunnel would be to your home, not from it, assuming you had a third party service provider to provide access in the first place. These two nonsense features mask the intent of Comcast to extort as much money from there users as possible. Simply put, Comcast says that if you want access to your email accounts from another supplier, you must pay Comcast for the priveledge.

I find this extremely distastful. It is exactly what everyone will have to look forward to if this merger is allowed to continue. AT&T is not exactly a shining example of customer service either, but they are better than Comcast my light years. If you allow this merger, you will be inflicting Comcast's bad service and behavior on AT&T customers (Comcast will run day-to-day operations). Also, the monopoly created will guarantee everyone pricey, but abysmal service.

If you really want to do the public a favor, require competition. That will improve service and lower rates. For example, Comcast owns the network in my neighborhood, and controls the "last mile" of cable. As such you are stuck with whatever they decide to do. If you mandated competition by requiring that Comcast provide access to other ISPs (with no dirty tricks), the public would be given a choice. For instance, in areas where Earthlink is permitted to offer ISP services over other cable companies wires, this service is generally more expensive. But the public has a choice. Earthlink gains customers by providing a better service, even though they are more expensive.

You would do the public a service my seeing to it that there is effective competition in cable, broadband access, and telephone service. That is what was supposed to happen with deregulation, but it didn't. Please don't allow this Comcast/AT&T monopoly to occur. Make sure there

is mandatory, fair, effective competition. Force this entity to offer other ISP services concurrent with its own, and do it from day one. Also, make them remove the arbitrary blockage of access to other email accounts. You wouldn't let Verizon, for example, tell its customers that they had to use Verizon long distance service for long distance calls would you? What would your choice be? Use Verizon, or limit yourself to local calls? The same is true with Comcast. Why do you allow it?

Comcast is likely to become the day-to-day operator of the combined entity. This will doom

-----=_NextPart_000_00A6_01C1F6BC.8A11EE40--