

January 25, 2002

Chairman Michael Powell  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Docket # 01-348

Dear Chairman Powell:

As you know, the proposed merger between Echostar and Hughes Electronics has the potential to bring new and exciting benefits to Louisiana's rural residents. Let me say that as an organization, Louisiana Farm Bureau wholeheartedly supports this proposed merger.

Rural residents in Louisiana stand to benefit from this merger in two ways: First, the new company will be able to provide digital services that up until now were only available to urban residents. Internet and broadband services would now be offered at competitive rates, thereby allowing rural residents the chance to overcome the "barrier of access" to these important services.

Second, it would benefit those who get much of their farm news from the Farm Bureau's television program, "*This Week in Louisiana Agriculture*." Our program currently reaches most of its satellite viewers on the Dish Network station "RFD-TV." Since RFD-TV is one of the channels that would benefit directly from the merger, it means more rural residents would have access to our program and, therefore, greater access to news that affects them directly.

I would ask that you give serious consideration to the proposed merger. Your support will mean greater connectivity to rural residents. I would be happy to speak to you at greater length on this matter. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ronald Anderson  
President

RA:bwm