

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to you today as a current satellite TV subscriber who would like to add my voice of non-support to the pending merger of EchoStar and DIRECTV. The combination of these two satellite providers will provide a monopoly on the satellite choices which will assure that the new DISH/DirectTV company will be able to dictate prices and programming much like the cable providers of the past.

By merging, the combined company might possibly be a much stronger competitor to cable television, it is true, but then there are SEVERAL cable providers to choose from, aren't there? Shouldn't there also have to be several satellite companies to choose from in order to ensure superior satellite programming?

As far as this merger providing local TV channels in every market in the U.S., they already provide local TV channels. How would this make it any better? Those extra local stations would continue to only be provided at a cost over and above the cost of the current required subscription price. On top of charging extra for local programming as well as requiring an expensive package just to keep service, satellite companies also require a per/room fee for additional rooms, unlike cable companies, and they [or at least DISH] also charges a fee to change programming to a lower priced service or one that keeps the monthly costs the same, while not charging that same fee when more expensive programming is added.

If stronger regulations were implemented to insure the new DISH/DirectTV company did not take advantage of customers, then there might be a better argument for the merger, but I don't see that occurring. Some changes needed would be:

1) Re-instating the national feed for PBS as a viewer choice. The national feed was offered as part of the \$32/month programming from DirectTV, while DISH charged \$12/yr for that feed. Now it is included in the \$5/month local stations package from DISH [more costly than the \$12/yr] and DirectTV now offers the PBS Kids channel in the place of the PBS feed. [One example of satellite choices.]

2) Requiring a family package offer, something Direct TV offers, but DISH does not. [Another example of satellite choices.] If the government truly believes in helping families, then it should not be regulating against family programming choices, but for them instead. Both providers offer several movie packages, but those movie packages are not wanted by many families. Instead young families want the choices of Discovery channels, The Learning Channel, PBS, etc, but not at a price far and above the other choices [DISH offers those channels, but in a more expensive main package, DirectTV offers it as a second package]. It shouldn't cost more for good family programming.

3) Requiring that pricing deals be equal for new as well as current subscribers. i.e. DISH is currently selling their new PVR receiver to new customers for \$99, but their existing/paying customers must pay \$199 for that same receiver.

It is my understanding that any time there is only one big company offering the bulk of the services to the nation, it is either called a monopoly which is illegal, or it is called a public utility which is highly regulated by the

government. I doubt the government is planning to make the new DISH/DirectTV company a public utility, so it will then become a monopoly which is illegal.

The merger sounds like a nice plan for the companies involved, but I am against having only one choice of satellite service to pick from. I have more than one cable company to pick from, why not satellite?

As far as the availability of high-speed internet service, they already provide that service. I believe both DirectTV and DISH can continue to provide that service without merging. How would their merging help make that service any better other than financial for them? I don't see how that could possibly help in providing better customer service.

As far as I see it, the merger of DirectTV and DISH does

Sincerely,

C Atwood
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