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Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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Honorable John Ashcroft
Attorney General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

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JAN 17 2002

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY



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

Dear Attorney General Ashcroft and Chairman Powell:

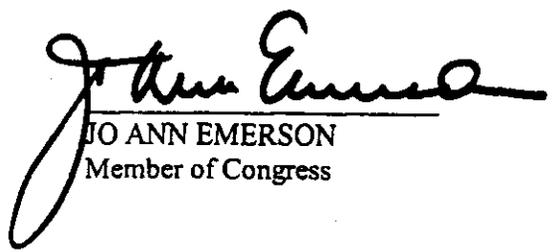
As Members of Congress who represent rural areas, we are writing today regarding the impact of the proposed merger of EchoStar (the DISH Network) and Hughes Electronics (DirecTV) on rural consumers.

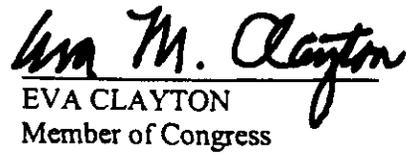
Currently, EchoStar and Hughes are the only two providers of Direct Broadcast Satellite services (both video and high-speed Internet) in the U.S. market. As you are well aware, many consumers in rural America have no access to cable and rely on satellite television for their multi-channel video programming. The rural consumers that presently have a choice between two fiercely competitive satellite providers will be subjected to an unchecked monopoly provider if the merger is approved without appropriate consumer protections.

Accordingly, we believe that strictly enforced consumer safeguards regarding price, quality and access to vital telecommunication services must be part of any merger approval between Echostar and Hughes. Rural consumers have been left behind in the wake of the communications revolution with respect to access and pricing of telecommunications services for too long. We urge the Department of Justice and Federal Communications Commission to rigorously scrutinize this proposed merger to ensure that rural consumers do not suffer the consequences of higher prices, fewer choices and reduced services. Meaningful and enforceable concessions, are needed, not empty pledges that provide no protection or value.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,


JO ANN EMERSON
Member of Congress


EVA CLAYTON
Member of Congress

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