

I am writing to express my support for the Echostar, DirectTV merger.

From what I have read, the issues surrounding this merger center around the belief that it will create a near monopoly of the satellite television delivery market. Personally, I don't believe there is a satellite delivery market, but rather a home entertainment market. And, within this broader definition, the proposed merger will allow the new combined satellite company to compete more effectively with land-based cable companies. I believe the result of this competition will provide better and less expensive home entertainment for us, the consumers.

Consider my current choices. I live in Grand Rapids, MI. My choices are either AT&T cable or satellite (either DirectTV or Echostar). Because, however, I live in a smaller market, neither DirectTV nor Echostar has the bandwidth to provide my local channels. Normally this would leave me with the obvious choice of cable - the use of the word obvious being indicative of the unfair advantage cable companies now have), but being an early adopter of technology, I own a high definition TV (HDTV) and cable does not offer any HD programming. The satellite providers do, however. So, back to my choices: Cable with local broadcasts, but no HD service, satellite service with HD programming, but no local channels, or a combination of satellite, with a life-line cable package (local programming only). In order to receive local channels and HD programming my only choice was the later option - a combination of packages - which costs me more money.

Being a businessman, VP of Development for a software company, I understand, and respect, AT&T's decision to not provide cable HD programming. I wish, however, that my desire to enjoy the wonders of HDTV would also be respected. By allowing the proposed merger, the combined satellite company will have the capacity to offer the citizens of Grand Rapids, and other smaller communities, with local programming in addition to expanding its HD programming. This would provide me with the choice, as a consumer, that I (and others) desire. Isn't that what free enterprise is about?