

On February 17, 2002 I attempted to change my programming package with DirectTV. In the past, DirectTV has not required that consumers subscribe to their "Total Choice" package in order to subscribe to local channels and/or premium channels such as HBO, Showtime and Starz. However, on Feb. 17 I was informed by a customer service representative and a supervisor at DirectTV's 800 number that, in the future, if I want to change programming packages, I would also have to subscribe to their "Total Choice" package for \$35.00 per month. Otherwise, I would have to maintain my current package (Local channels and HBO/StarzII) which I am "grandfathered into" (their words).

This new policy began, I was told, on January 31. However, I was never informed of this change prior to Feb. 17, when I called to request a change in my program package. If I had been informed of this change of policy in advance, I would have requested a change in programming packages prior to Jan. 31.

This new policy is anti-consumer! If I want to change programming packages (which I do), in order for me to subscribe to channels that I do watch (premium and local channels), I must also pay 35.00 per month (420.00 per year) for a package of channels that I do not watch.

At the time that I chose to install a satellite dish last year, I was told by DirectTV representatives that I could purchase packages "a la carte", without subscribing to their "Choice" packages. Now DirectTV has only one "Choice" package which it requires current customers to subscribe to if those customers want to change their programming packages.

It is obvious that this kind of anti-competitive policy is typical of what we can expect if the Dish TV- DirectTV merger is permitted by the FCC.

I urge you to insist that DirectTV rescind its new policy of requiring customers to subscribe to its "Choice" package and return to the policy of allowing customers to subscribe "a la carte." I also urge you to stop the anti-competitive merger between the two satellite TV companies.

Sincerely,

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