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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4104

February 1, 2002

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JUN 18 2002

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to you regarding the proposed merger between DirecTV and EchoStar. It is my understanding that this merger must be reviewed by both the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Justice before it may proceed.

The review is critical to ensuring any merger of this magnitude does not carry with it unintended consequences. In particular, I am concerned about affordable access to television signals in rural America. This proposed merger between DirecTV and EchoStar will be very important to many of my constituents in South Dakota. South Dakotans, like other Americans, depend on television for important news, weather, community information, and programming.

Several issues must be examined before it can be determined whether this proposed merger is beneficial to South Dakotans who receive television programming via satellite dishes. I cannot stress enough how important it is for you to consider the impact this merger would have on rural America as you make a decision to grant or deny a merger application.

Rural Americans deserve the same access and programming choices that are available in urban areas at a reasonable price. I will continue to monitor action on this merger to ensure that rural interests are fully considered when a decision is made by the FCC.

Thank you for your careful review of this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Tim Johnson
United States Senate

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TO: CHAIRMAN POWELL C/O LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

FROM: ADAM C. HEALY, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

DATE: 1 FEB 2002

NUMBER OF PAGES TO FOLLOW COVER SHEET: 1

MESSAGE: HARD COPY IN THE MAIL