

THEODORE W. KHEEL

PARK AVENUE TOWER

75 EAST 55TH STREET

NEW YORK, NY 10022

April 8, 2002

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. SW
Washington DC 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

As one who has dedicated decades to the cause of constructive relationships between labor and management and, more recently, to worker education and training through distance learning, I write to you urging your strongest consideration of support of the merger between EchoStar and DIRECTV.

With plant closings and rising unemployment back in the headlines, I am hopeful the country will re-focus on the critical difference between permanent employment and permanent employability. Once again it has become apparent that no company can guarantee permanent employment to every employee. On the other hand, if my membership on the Board of Directors of the Association of Joint Labor-Management Educational Programs has taught me anything, it is that employees can guarantee their continued *employability* by continuing their education and updating their skills.

In the 1990' s, our much-discussed economic expansion failed to protect the downsizing of hundreds of thousands of mostly industrial workers. Fortunately, we have seen an encouraging development that began in the mid ' 80' s of joint labor-management educational and training programs which employers as well as employees have found beneficial.

The big obstacle is logistics. It sounds ideal to take 50 assembly line workers and re-train them as computer technicians. But can the company spare them off the assembly line for a few hours each day? And think about the practical problems of finding a time when 50 individuals could attend a class together on their own time.

Online distance learning education is a powerful solution to this problem. And widespread access to high-speed " broadband" Internet technology would make the solution a practical reality for hundreds of thousands of workers.

That kind of access is now within our grasp thanks to the proposed merger of satellite TV carriers EchoStar and DIRECTV. While the merger offers numerous other benefits including a new level of competition that will benefit pay-TV customers in every market across the country, I am happy to support the merger just on the basis of what it could do for distance learning.

By combining both their broadcast spectrum and the resources they' ve dedicated to launching another generation of satellites, EchoStar and DIRECTV together would have the capacity to offer high-speed Internet service via satellite to every home and small business in America at one competitive nationwide price. No wires. No need to live within the territory of a cable TV company that

offers broadband service. No need to live within two miles of a telephone company central office in order to get high-speed “ DSL” Internet service.

Small companies could offer employees interactive distance learning on premises without investing in elaborate teleconferencing equipment. Better still, any employee could use his or her home broadband connection to take self-paced courses over the TV. This brings new meaning to the concept of educational television.

Satellite Internet service from the new EchoStar would not be the only source of broadband. But in many homes around the country, notably in rural areas and under-served urban neighborhoods, satellite delivery could be the only practical alternative. Bridging this Digital Divide between wealthy, wired ‘ haves’ and poor and rural Internet ‘ have-nots’ is a crucial and necessary step toward a world with permanently *employable* workers.

The EchoStar-DIRECTV partnership represents an educational opportunity that translates into greater employability for millions of working Americans. It is rare when a corporate merger strengthens job security, but this one does and, in my view, it deserves your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Theodore W. Kheel

