

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

The proposed merger between Echostar/Dish Network & Direct TV would be a major benefit for American consumers for two major reasons.

First, the Satellite companies do not currently compete on a 'level playing field' with Cable companies. Because I live in Santa Cruz, CA -- not considered a 'major media market' -- neither Dish Network nor Direct TV offers my local network channels. They have promised to add them if this merger goes through. This would allow them to compete on equal terms with the local cable companies.

More importantly, Cable TV companies represent a major hindrance to the deployment of High Definition Television. I don't believe any cable systems in the entire state of California offer any High Definition programming. The only way that the Cable industry will change is if they have significant competitive pressure. Dish Network (Echostar) and Direct TV already offer some HDTV channels; this will 'force' the cable companies to begin offering High Definition broadcasting. The resulting competition will lower the prices for these services. It should also increase the amount of HDTV programming, which should stimulate the sales of High Definition televisions. The amount of this content will remain minimal until the cable companies have an incentive to upgrade. The Echostar/Direct TV merger will accomplish that.

Please vote for this merger. Thank you.

Sincerely,

James LaBrie
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Santa Cruz, CA 95062