

I am writing from Bainbridge Island, WA just a few miles west of Seattle and I would like to show my support for the merger between Echostar and DirectTV. When I moved here I had to make a decision about my television and broadband services. Most of the broadcast stations are not available because of the hills that block the reception. No DSL or Internet cable provide serves the area. For the tv service, the alternatives were cable (the local provider Northland Cable was offering 40 analog channels for about \$45 plus taxes, no digital channels) or satellite. I chose the satellite because it was going to save me a couple of hundreds dollar just the first year.

For the internet service, the only option was satellite internet but the high cost of this solution was not affordable to me so I had to opt for a 56k modem. I think my experience is very common. People are subject to a cable monopoly that can fix its prices as high as it wants and limits the services available to customer, and to a phone company monopoly (Qwest in my case) that does not install the equipment to expand availability of broadband internet. Do I want to add a satellite provider 'monopoly' to this picture? Yes, I do. Because at least that 'monopoly' will be strong enough to compete with the other two. The real risk here is not that Echostar/DirectTV will be a monopoly but that they will be put out of business by ever growing cable companies and that, only that, will reduce the choices for consumers and will consolidate the monopolies of cable and phone companies.

Just to add a little information, last November the local Northland Cable has been bought by AT&T. Another small operator disappears, the huge one grows hugger.

Please, support the merger Echostart/DirectTV to give customers a real strong alternative to cable and phone companies.

Thank you.