

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing this message to you with regard to the proposed merger of Dish Network and DirecTV. I understand that you are one of the elected officials that are looking into this.

I am currently a DirecTV customer and a former Dish Network customer. As such, I have been following the merger information as described by Mr. Ergen on Dish Network.

At first, I was in favor of this merger. It seemed that it could make programming more affordable since the combined resources of both companies would be available to all of their combined customers.

I was frankly a bit skeptical though, since it is no secret that this merger would create a monopoly in the small satellite dish industry.

What turned out to be the proverbial 'straw that broke the camel's back' has been the YES Network fiasco.

As I am sure you are aware, Cablevision and Dish Network have not come to terms with the YES Network.

Since Major League Baseball season began on April 1st, I was faced with the prospect of only being able to receive 32 of 162 baseball games on Dish Network. Since my local cable company here in Ossining, N.Y. is Cablevision, I would not be able to receive those games on cable TV either. My only recourse at that point was to switch to DirecTV.

DirecTV and the YES Network came to terms before the baseball season began. The DirecTV customers have been able to receive the YES Network broadcasts from the moment that YES went on-the-air on March 19th for no additional charge. Some games are even available to fans outside the New York metropolitan area for an additional annual fee.

Here is my point - if the merger had happened before the formation of the YES Network and if the new combined company (Echostar DirecTV?) had decided not to carry the YES Network, I would have no way at all to receive those Yankees games (short of putting my home of 17 1/2 years up for sale!)

I was born in the Bronx and am a lifelong Yankees fan. I am deeply distressed by the fact that during this negotiation period between these networks, we the customers have been held hostage by uncompromising parties.

It is due to this experience that I am writing you to urge you NOT to support the merger between Dish Network and DirecTV.

Cable TV is already a monopoly.

Should Satellite TV become a monopoly too?

You will recall that another player in Satellite TV, Primestar went out of business a few years ago. Their customers and assets were split between the remaining players. And then there were two...

I believe that competition and customer choice is the backbone of Free Enterprise. If we are to allow those fundamentals to disappear, customers will surely suffer.

The YES Network debacle is an excellent example of the fact that this merger would result in fewer opportunities for customers to get the kinds of programming that they really want.

I already get local channels and don't need to get broadband Internet access via satellite. I will not be buying HDTV anytime soon. With those facts in mind, there is nothing that this proposed merger has to offer me.

I am not alone.

I urge you to work against the merger of these two remaining Satellite TV companies so that we can continue to choose what we watch.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Ira Lichtenstein
37 Iroquois Road
Ossining, NY 10562