

ORIGINAL

BLANCHE LAMBERT LINCOLN
ARKANSAS

256 ORKSEN BUILDING
TELEPHONE: (202) 224-4840

www.senate.gov/~lincoln

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
FINANCE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON ETHICS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

April 9, 2002

MBK
EchoStar
pv
MKP
1680

01-348

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing regarding the proposed merger between EchoStar and DirecTV. During your review, I urge you to assess the impact that a consolidation in the satellite-television industry, and multi-channel television services, could have on consumers in rural America.

Cable is not available to half of the homes in Arkansas. Consequently, satellite service is the only option for many of my constituents who want multi-channel television services. Currently, satellite subscribers can choose between competing satellite services offered by DirecTV and EchoStar. If these two satellite companies merge, it will leave rural consumers with a single provider of multi-channel television. In those areas with three providers (cable, EchoStar, and DirecTV), consumers will also find themselves suddenly subject to diminished competition.

In addition to my concerns about diminished choices for the people that I represent, I also want to ensure that consumers do not face higher rates as a result of this merger. I am interested in how this consolidation could affect programming costs.

Last, as you know, cable providers are statutorily obligated to provide an emergency alert system. Please consider whether the merged satellite provider should also provide an emergency alert at the local level as part of its commitment to provide local-into-local in all markets.

Again, I ask that the Commission carefully scrutinize these proposals to ensure that competition in multi-channel television is not impaired. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of this proposed merger's impact on rural America.

Sincerely,

Blanche L. Lincoln
Blanche L. Lincoln

MAY 9 3 36 PM '02

RECEIVED

JUN 18 2002

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

No. of Copies rec'd
List ABCDE

2