



League of United Latin American Citizens

February 5, 2002

Chairman Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Docket # 01-348.

Dear Chairman Powell:

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the oldest and largest Hispanic civil rights organization in the nation, believes that the proposed merger between satellite television providers EchoStar and DIRECTV would provide improved communications services to the nation's Hispanic community and we are writing to advise you of our support.

The goal of LULAC's "Empower Hispanic America with Technology" project is to break down the digital divide that keeps telecommunications technology out of reach of Hispanic Americans. This digital divide puts millions of the nation's Latinos – especially those living in rural areas – at a great technological and educational disadvantage. We believe this merger is the best way to provide access to affordable high speed Internet service – broadband – to these disadvantaged Americans. We are concerned that, absent the merger, nationwide satellite broadband service will not be realized for many years. We understand that the merger will allow for the necessary investment in satellite technology to deploy satellite-delivered broadband, service that other industries have been unable to provide. As a matter of national technology policy, it is unacceptable to create a situation whereby only homes that are passed by digital cable or fiber-optic telephone lines have broadband access when such service could also be made available to all homes via a satellite alternative.

In addition, diverse programming is very important to our members – from family entertainment and educational shows to news and weather in Spanish and international sports coverage. Over the years both EchoStar and DIRECTV have offered a great deal of programming for Spanish-dominant and bilingual households, but the potential exists for even more. We believe the merger would benefit Hispanic Americans by freeing up wasted spectrum, thereby allowing more independent networks, more Spanish language programming, including programming from Caribbean, Latin American, and South American countries.

Finally, the two companies have been friends of the Latino community. Twenty percent of Echostar's 11,500 employees are of Hispanic origin, DIRECTV employs more than 800 bilingual workers to support the DIRECTV PARA TODOS™, and DIRECTV English-language services.

We believe this merger is pro-consumer, pro-competition, and would put fast, affordable, broadband service into Hispanic communities across the country. We urge you to support its approval.

Sincerely,

Rick Dovalina
LULAC National President