

COUNTY LEGISLATURE
JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI
OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE REVIEW
MARY LOU SMITH, DIRECTOR

JACKSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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April 18, 2002

The Hon. Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 – 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20544

Re: EchoStar/Hughes merger
FCC Docket # 01-348

Dear Commissioner Powell:

Right now, EchoStar Communications Corp. (the Dish Network) and Hughes Electronics Corp. (DirecTV) serve about 40 markets in the U.S. with Direct Broadcast Satellite service – only large markets, of course. If the companies are allowed to merge, they have pledged that in five years, the new EchoStar will serve all 210 U.S. markets, including rural areas do not have easy access to pay TV.

Right now, if residents and businesses outside those largest markets want high-speed Internet access, their option is to get it either through cable TV companies or phone companies, whose local monopolies give them little incentive to innovate or to hold down rates. But a merged EchoStar would provide meaningful competition for telephone and cable.

Right now, we have the technology for satellite broadcast of high-definition TV, pay-per-view, educational, specialty and foreign-language programming and, of course, high-speed Internet access. Why on earth would we not allow Americans, whatever the size of their market, to benefit from this? Please support the EchoStar merger.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Smith
Director
Office of Compliance Review