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INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM

March 26, 2002

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

As the woman's voice for freedom and free enterprise, the Independent Women's Forum strongly supports the proposed merger of DirecTV and Echostar.

With its combined broadcast spectrum, the post merger company would offer not only satellite access to local broadcast channels for all Americans, but also satellite delivered broadband service to every home and business in the country at one uniform price. This merger will achieve a simple, free enterprise solution to the much-discussed "digital divide" problem, with no cost to taxpayers and no need for special government programs.

While widespread deployment of affordable broadband is clearly in the national interest, it has particularly important implications for American women. Although there have been significant social changes over the last 30 years, women still carry the heavy end of the work/family balancing act. More often than not, women are the ones who sacrifice their career or education and they are the ones who stay at home, meet the day-to-day demands of a family and primarily assist in their children's education. The more that we can make broadband services available to all American homes, urban and rural, the more women will be able to embrace the opportunities this technology provides for telecommuting, small business operation, education continuance or easing the burden of everyday tasks.

In addition to supporting the DirecTV merger for the economic benefits that accessible, affordable broadband would bring to women, we also support the merger for the additional scope it would bring to TV programming. The combined spectrum and elimination of duplicative programming would mean more niche programming addressing the special needs and interests of women.

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As a professional economist, the most important attribute of this merger is the increased competition it will pose to cable companies in local markets. While the decreased operating costs due to economies of scale inherent in this merger may well benefit consumers, the basic economics of this decision are simple: competition means more choices, higher quality, and lower prices for customers. Moreover, although it is true that all consumers would benefit from the new level of competition the merged company would bring to both the pay-TV and broadband services markets, the merger could create substantial opportunities for American women. It is for their sake that the Independent Women's Forum urges you and the Federal Communications Commission to approve this merger promptly and without substantive changes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Pfotenhauer". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Nancy M. Pfotenhauer  
President