

February 4, 2002

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

Dear Mr. Powell,

As Executive Director of the Montana World Trade Center, I am deeply committed to growing Montana's economy. I can speak from experience when I say Montana has always had a challenge to catch up with our urban competitors because of its remote location.

The proposed Echostar/DirectTV merger would help Montana instantly achieve parity for the first time in information technology. By merging, these two companies can eliminate duplicative programming which takes up valuable frequency so that they may then direct those frequencies to broadband, high-speed internet, additional programming, including local markets that small states like Montana currently cannot receive by satellite.

I can attest to the advantages these improvements to our communications' abilities would mean to businesses all across Montana. Cable controls at least 85% of the paid television market and it is obvious in a rural state like Montana that they only serve city areas. Many ranchers, farmers and small businesses have no cable access and they likely never will because of their remote location. Some do not even have telephone lines. The Echostar/DirectTV merger would make Montana more competitive in the global marketplace, allowing ranches and rural businesses to connect with the rest of the world no matter what their location.

Please review this merger application carefully and remember that rural America stands to benefit most from this merger if it is approved. Anyone who says otherwise probably doesn't live in a place like Circle, Montana, where communication abilities are limited to say the least.

It will take a large satellite company that has enough frequency available to it to be able to serve every rural home, school, business and law enforcement agency in Montana. A merged Echostar/DirectTV can do what no one else has been able to do for Montana before. With Nationwide pricing guarantees already promised in congressional testimony, as well as a commitment to at least one local-to-local market in every state, Montana would be protected from unreasonable price hikes while also receiving a local market when without a merger, Montana likely never would.

I look forward to a favorable conclusion to your review of this merger and your active support of it. Montana could actually join the 21st century as far as communications is concerned. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best regards,

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