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August 23, 2001

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to express my opposition to EchoStar's attempt to acquire DirecTV. I am well aware of EchoStar's argument that combining these two satellite broadcasters would provide for stronger competition with cable companies. This may indeed be true in urban and suburban communities, but for millions of Americans in rural areas, the combination of EchoStar and DirecTV would effectively eliminate any competition.

I live in rural Montana, where my nearest community is the town of Ovando, population 70. For those of us who live in places like this all across America, cable TV is not and never will be an option. It simply doesn't exist. And the closest TV stations are so far away that over-the-air broadcast signals are not a practical option either. The result is that satellite TV is the only broadcast service we have, and our choice today is between EchoStar and DirecTV.

My concerns are these: What will happen to those of us in rural America if we end up with only one satellite TV provider? How will we be protected from the lack of competition in this marketplace? What will prevent EchoStar from jacking up prices whenever they choose?

For what it's worth, I am not a shareholder in EchoStar, GM Hughes or News Corp. I am just a consumer who is alarmed at the prospect of a national monopoly in satellite TV service.



Steven P. Smith

Cc: Senator Max Baucus  
Senator Conrad Burns  
Rep. Dennis Rehberg