

CS 01-348:

I wish to express my strong opposition to the proposed merger of the EchoStar Dish direct broadcast satellite (DBS) system with the Hughes DirecTV DBS system.

I believe that this merger is not in the public interest. This merger will create an unregulated DBS monopoly, which, I believe, will be bad for consumers.

If this merger is allowed to proceed, I fear it will lead to higher prices for consumers, fewer choices for consumers, and all of the other bad things associated with unregulated monopolies.

I would think that the Antitrust Laws of the United States would prevent this type of unregulated monopoly from coming into existence.

EchoStar Dish and Hughes DirecTV are both healthy companies and the free market competition between them is very good for the public.

If this merger is allowed to proceed now, it could not be reversed at a later date because of the plan to switch all customers over to the one and only surviving DBS system.

Consumers used to have a choice of three DBS systems: EchoStar Dish, DirecTV, or PrimeStar. PrimeStar went away, and now consumers have a good choice between EchoStar Dish and Hughes DirecTV. This choice is good for consumers, is in the public interest, and should not be eliminated.

If this merger takes place, the FCC may have to heavily regulate the new DBS company in order to protect consumers and TV channel suppliers from monopolistic practices by the new DBS monopoly company. It would be far better to maintain the status quo where FCC regulation is not needed because of the healthy free market competition between EchoStar Dish and Hughes DirecTV.

I believe it is not in the public interest to allow these two healthy companies to merge and create an unregulated DBS monopoly.

Sincerely, Ronald M. VandeVrede