

I am writing as a current satellite TV subscriber who strongly supports the pending merger of EchoStar and DIRECTV. The combination of these two satellite providers will provide numerous benefits -- especially to consumers like me who NOT have access to cable or DSL as alternatives for TV and broadband. In particular, the merger will free up limited public transponder bandwidth now wasted with duplicate channel coverage to allow delivery of more HDTV, improved picture quality for current programming, and more programming choices that cannot be added today by either company due to lack of transponder capacity.

Of equal importance, the merger means that many of us would gain access to broadband Internet service that is truly financially viable over the long term: Today, the subscriber base for the satellite broadband offerings of either EchoStar or Hughes alone is simply NOT large enough to make these offerings profitable -- and is the big reason I have not opted to invest the money to sign up with either one. And because I do not have access to either DSL or cable-modem service (despite living well within the huge D.C./Northern Virginia metro area), I must continue to suffer with 26.4k maximum Internet dialup access. Satellite broadband offers me the only alternative -- but only if the two providers are allowed to merge.

The combined company will be a much stronger competitor to cable television and will offer more programming choices, far better customer service, and most importantly, all local TV channels in every market in the U.S. By providing local TV channels everywhere, this merger will make satellite television a strong alternative to cable in our community. Throughout the country, people will now be able to turn to satellite TV to access their local news, weather and community information, in addition to a comprehensive package of national video programming. But just as exciting, the merger will bring the availability of affordable high-speed Internet service by satellite to over 40 million Americans who don't have high-speed Internet access. These tremendous benefits to consumers won't happen without the merger. Satellite-delivered Internet service will bring an affordable and competitive alternative to cable modems and DSL to consumers in big cities, small towns and rural areas alike. This will give me a competitive choice for Internet access and will be especially advantageous to rural communities where cable modems and DSL are not likely to be available anytime in the near future.

In the interest of improving our access to competitive television and Internet service, I urge you to lend your support to this merger.