

# Westport Merchants Association

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March 25, 2002

The Honorable Michael K. Powell  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 – 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20544

Dear Commissioner Powell:

Right here in Kansas City, we just had a bone-chilling reminder of why the Department of Justice and the FCC should approve the proposed merger between EchoStar Communications Corp. (Dish Network) and Hughes Electronics Corp. (DirecTV) – the devastating ice storm that shut down much of our city’s power, light and communications at the end of January and early February.

Cable TV and Internet access were not the worst problems we had to face after the ice storm – most of us were more worried about when our lights and furnaces would come back on. But we couldn’t help but notice that our cable service seemed to take a *long* time to reappear. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, a business columnist in the Kansas City Star counted up how long it took our friendly local cable monopoly to get his service back on – 24 days, which was 19 days longer than the lights and 16 days longer than the phone.

This is just one more argument in favor of the EchoStar merger. Cable companies, protected by their government franchises, control some 80% of the pay TV market, not to mention broadband Internet access over cable. This is the monopoly that controls access to these 21<sup>st</sup>-century technologies; and this is the monopoly where real competition can be introduced by the EchoStar merger. (FCC Docket # 01-348.)

By enabling EchoStar to expand and improve its Direct Broadcast Satellite services, this merger creates genuine competition in the television and Internet markets. I urge you to support it.

Yours truly,

Greg Lever  
Executive Director