

March 29, 2002

The Hon. Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 – 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20544

Dear Commissioner Powell:

It has come to my attention that a proposed merger between EchoStar Communications Corp. (the Dish Network) and Hughes Electronics Corp. (DirecTV), pending before the Department of Justice and the FCC (Docket # 01-348), is being examined for its potential impact on the Direct Satellite Broadcast industry.

But as a former Mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, the monopoly that catches my eye is cable TV. Cable companies control 80 percent of the pay TV market – a monopoly protected by government franchises – and a sizable percentage of broadband Internet access too. That's the monopoly that caused problems for Kansas Citians who waited, sometimes for weeks, to have their cable service turned on after the devastating ice storm this winter. That's the monopoly that makes it almost impossible for rural residents to have pay TV or high-speed Internet at all, unless they happen to have satellite service.

EchoStar has pledged that, by 2005, the merged company will be able to offer local TV channels, high-speed Internet service and more – not just in the 40 or so markets they now serve, but in all 210 U.S. markets. Consumers will clearly benefit.

I urge you to support the EchoStar/DirecTV merger. American satellite technology should be allowed to benefit all Americans.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Dr. Charles B. Wheeler
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