

Zeeland Charter Township

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June 30, 1998

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Chairman William Kennard
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Room 814
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Kennard:

On behalf of the Township of Zeeland and its residents, I am writing you about the proposed merger of ~~Ameritech and Southwestern Bell Telephone Company~~ (SBC) and the threat it may pose to cable competition by taking Ameritech out of the cable business.

Municipalities and their residents have wanted competition in cable service for many years. The 1996 Telecommunications Act encouraged phone companies to get into the cable business. Congress and many others expected this to occur. This was one reason Congress partially deregulated cable rates starting in the spring of 1999.

Ameritech is one of the few phone companies vigorously entering the cable business. In two years its cable subsidiary, Ameritech New Media, has obtained cable franchises in over 75 communities in Michigan, Illinois, Ohio and Wisconsin. With these franchises it can provide cable service to 1.2 million homes, or over 10% of the homes in these four states. In Michigan it is franchised to serve 16% of our state's homes.

By contrast, SBC has decided to get out of the cable business. It sold off or shut down its cable systems in Virginia, Texas and California. SBC thus may be unwilling to commit to continuing Ameritech New Media's cable operations and expansion if the merger is approved.

Our municipality would like to get the benefits of cable competition, such as improved cable systems, more channels, better service and stabilized rates. We want Ameritech to stay in the cable business so that this can happen.

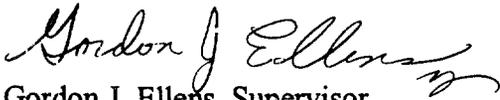
We are concerned that the proposed merger of Ameritech and SBC will lead to Ameritech going out of the cable business. This would be contrary to the intent of Congress. Over 1.2 million homes could lose competition in cable service, including 16% of the homes in Michigan. It would prevent the other 84% of the homes in Michigan – including our community and its residents – from being served by the only company in our area who provides true facilities-based competition in cable service.

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Ameritech/(SBC)

Please make sure that if the proposed merger of Ameritech and SBC is approved that Ameritech stays in the cable business and provides cable service to all the communities in its area who want it. Otherwise the merger will decrease cable competition. This is not what Congress intended nor does it serve the public interest.

Sincerely,



Gordon J. Ellens, Supervisor
ZFELAND CHARTER TOWNSHIP

vz

cc: Commissioner Harold Furchtgott-Roth
Commissioner Michael Powell
Commissioner Gloria Tristani
Commissioner Susan Ness
Ms. Susan Fox
Mr. Rick Chessen