



# NATIONAL GRANGE OF THE ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY

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*American Values. Hometown Roots.*

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September 22, 2014

Ms. Marlene Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Applications of AT&T, Inc. and DIRECTV for Consent to Assign or Transfer  
Control of Licenses & Authorizations, MB Docket No. 14-90**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The National Grange supports the proposed merger of DIRECTV and AT&T. The combined company has committed to expanding high-speed Internet access to many rural areas of the country, including many communities that currently do not have reliable access to modern connectivity. This is a key issue for rural America, and this merger offers important solutions for our communities.

Since 1867, the Grange has advocated for rural America, working to bring opportunity and prosperity to farmers and rural communities. We have always been a family and community organization with a focus on agriculture, and today, we are proud to be part of over 2,100 hometowns across America.

Of course, the focus of our advocacy has evolved over time. In the past, our organization worked on many rural access issues, including rural mail delivery and electricity. Today, we recognize the fact that affordable access to high-speed Internet service is as vital to modern life and to rural livelihoods as rural mail delivery once was—and even more so. But because our communities are smaller, and often remote, many rural Americans still struggle to gain this essential resource.

In areas where this service is available, there are often inadequate choices or few desirable options for consumers. With this merger, AT&T has committed to expanding access to high-speed connectivity to millions of customers across the country, largely in rural areas. Together, these complementary companies will be better able to serve Americans in rural areas by offering competitive, integrated bundles of television,

Internet, and mobile services as well as a new, standalone broadband service. Rural residents will gain more service options and improved reliability.

This is welcome news, and it represents an opportunity for many rural Americans to benefit from increased competition and cutting-edge, evolving technologies. Farmers and ranchers are increasingly using a variety of devices and mobile applications to complete tasks, monitor crop growth and livestock, and track weather or commodity prices.

In addition to agriculture, this connectivity will bring new opportunities for economic development, education, health care as well. Students would have access to distance learning, making it possible to take online courses in subjects that aren't available in smaller school districts.

That same connection offers opportunities for telecommuting or online jobs, as well as professional and personal networking opportunities. Rural communities will also be able to take advantage of telemedicine initiatives and programs that make it possible for patients to receive health care at home with wireless medical devices.

In rural communities where broadband is currently available, the services and speeds offered are often inadequate for the needs of modern families and households. Enhanced Internet service will allow people to video-chat with loved ones or watch streaming movies from Netflix without endless buffering delays. A reliable and fast connection would also bring opportunities for home security monitoring and improved public safety options for small communities.

The connectivity needs of Americans in rural areas aren't so different from those of Americans in urban areas. We all want more possibilities for our children, small businesses, and communities. We all want equality of opportunity and we are eager to benefit from technological innovations. Now, two complementary companies, by joining to create a unique new entity, will have the ability to offer options and choices that will benefit rural residents across the country and deliver new opportunities to our communities.

We urge you to support the AT&T / DirecTV merger, which will have demonstrable benefits for consumers in the rural areas we represent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward L. Luttrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "L".

Edward L. Luttrell, President  
The National Grange