

The FCC is considering allowing the merger of GTE and Bell Atlantic. As a private citizen and a consumer of telecommunications services, I believe it would be in my best interest if this merger were not allowed.

Since telecommunications deregulation began in earnest a few years ago, the data communications field has exploded. Internet companies have sprung up to efficiently deal with the new possibilities presented by the global Internet. Now, in all aspects of the digital age, EXCEPT the physical networking, especially the physical networking to the home, the consumer has a broad range of choices for quality of service, price, types of service, etc.. While many solutions have been proposed to open the local loop, and while this is not an easy thing to do, one cannot deny that the ILECs have done every thing they can do to stall this. The U.S. consumer is being held hostage by these companies while they attempt to undo the AT&T monopoly breakup to no publically beneficial end.

Here is my suggestion. Refuse ALL mergers and acquisitions involving the ILECs until they either (a) divest the physical portion of their networks so that anyone may fairly compete for services on top of them or (b) require some percent (maybe 25% would be reasonable) of their lines be competition friendly, and, moreover, require them to show that in at least 20% of their COs, their competition has achieved at least a 10% market share. Yes, this requirement is contingent on the success of their competition, but only to the tune of 2%, and these numbers are not cast in stone here. However, the ILECs behavior has been reprehensible in this regard, so strong measures are taken. There is no doubt in my mind that the consumer will benefit from this.

For the benefit of the consumer, please consider fighting the good fight by rejecting any corporate move by the ILECs until and unless they have demonstrated some reasonable commitment to OSS parity.