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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2705

December 13, 2001

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to you regarding the potential impact of the proposed merger of EchoStar (the DISH Network) and Hughes Electronics (DirecTV) on rural consumers.

As you know, EchoStar and DirecTV are the only two providers of Direct Broadcast Satellite services (both video and high-speed Internet) in the U.S. market. Many consumers in rural America have no access to cable and rely on satellite television for their multi-channel video programming. For these rural Americans, the merger of EchoStar and DirecTV, if approved without appropriate consumer protections, would create an unchecked monopoly.

Consumer safeguards regarding pricing, quality of service and content of programming are important considerations that should be carefully reviewed. Time and time again rural consumers have been left behind in the wake of the communications revolution with respect to access and pricing of telecommunications. I urge the Federal Communications Commission to closely examine this proposed merger to ensure that rural consumers do not suffer the unintended consequences of higher prices, reduced services and fewer choices.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Chuck H.

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cc: The Honorable John Ashcroft

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