

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

As a customer of DIRECTV, I am writing to urge you NOT to support the pending merger of EchoStar and HUGHES, the parent company of DIRECTV. I believe the merger will hurt competition and allow them to gauge the consumer. The huge mega companies, such as AOL-Time Warner, and DirectTV, have only gotten worse at customer Seville as they have gotten larger. I also feel that with only one Satellite Provider, DirectTV will raise its prices because they will have a true monopoly in the rural areas that are not serviced by cable. They also will only have one competitor in the cable markets. This would severely harm the consumer.

I do have trouble understanding why you force us to view the networks through local affiliate monopolies which can interrupt our programs for any reason they see fit. The stations in my area have horrible signals over the air and have repeatedly denied me waivers so that I can view affiliates in other areas. These local monopolies get away with providing poor signals and interrupting programs for any reason they see fit. They may not have a monopoly on local news, but they do have a monopoly if I want to view certain programs. People should be able to pay extra for additional choices in other markets. This would force the local stations to provide better service and allow us to see our programs without local interruptions for events of no interest to many of us. Or maybe they could provide a system that allows people to opt out of the interruptions unless it involves the Emergency Broadcast System. Removing these antiquated FCC regulations (only if people are willing to pay extra, of course) would help many stations, because people who are from other states could view newscasts and local sports news shows from their home cities and not feel so isolated while they are living away from 'home'. This would help all stations increase their viewership with the former residents living in other areas. At the same time it would allow people to switch channels if they really want to see a program and the local weather or news person decides to interrupt to tell you it's raining outside.

I am a true believer in competition dictating improvements in service. The mega mergers should be stopped, especially when they result in fewer providers of a service or product. The Primestar/DirectTV merger has allowed DirectTV to add a few stations, but they, for instance, do not offer any network which carries Enterprise, or which carried Star Trek Voyager while it was on the air. They instead chose to add multiple nature type and other duplicate kinds of channels, while ignoring a huge audience demand because they knew they could. The only reason I didn't drop them was that they had and still have a monopoly on NFL Sunday Ticket. As a fan of an out of market NFL team, Dish is not an option for me. I keep hoping you will force the NFL to allow Dish Network to also offer NFL Sunday Ticket. However, the last thing I want is for DirectTV to be the only choice I have other than the local cable monopoly, AOL Time Warner.

So, please, do NOT allow this mega merger to happen. And please DO reconsider your views on 'protecting' local stations at the expense of the viewers

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I appreciate your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

Patrick Keefe  
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