

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

As a DIRECTV (Hughes) customer, a former cable customer, and a consumer familiar with Dish Network (Echostar), I want to voice my complete support for the proposed merger of the two companies. I have read some of the letters from various sources, including the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the Writers Guild Association (WGA), and the general public, which downplay this merger. Many of these claims do not take a look at the real picture. It appears that many of those who wrote these letters did not take the time to do their homework and research on this issue. It is my belief that the proposed merger between Echostar and Hughes should be approved without question, and the primary reasons for such are outlined below along with hard facts supporting why each of these benefits consumers.

1. Local channels made available in all 210 markets (DMA's).
2. Broadband access to every American.
3. Expanded High-Definition (HDTV) offerings.
4. More channels overall due to deletion of duplicative channels.
5. A complete alternative to cable.

(1)

As you can see, the benefits are in favor of all Americans. It is my belief that many of the letters from cable and broadcasting companies who are against this merger do so only because they will be forced to compete with satellite, since satellite will finally be on an equal playing field. Currently, satellite TV is at a disadvantage because of the inability to offer consumers, as separate companies, all that the merger proposes. Cable companies already overcharge for their services and most only offer little variety of programming with a poor picture quality in some cases. The only good thing that comes from cable is the ability to get local channels from virtually any cable system. Since the satellite companies are restricted to offering local signals as opposed to being able to offer distant network signals, consumers are at a disadvantage because since there are over 1,600 local channels in the United States, no single satellite provider can carry them all. Every American should have the right to receive all of their local broadcast channels from satellite rather than just cable or an antenna and that should be a main staple of society. By allowing the merger, the combined company would be able to eliminate duplicate channel offerings, effectively freeing up space on existing satellites to offer local channels in all 210 market areas (DMA's), as both companies have promised would be the first benefit to be put in place. This would also guarantee that every consumer would receive a clear picture no matter how far they live from stations' transmitters, effectively allowing every American to receive local channels as if they were all in the "Grade A" contour. Under the current system, consumers have to request waivers from their local stations in order to receive distant network signals on satellite. In some markets, stations do not want to grant waivers to even the consumers that live outside the "Grade B" contour as defined by the Satellite Home Viewer

Improvement Act (SHVIA). The "Grade B" contour is defined as those households who can receive a 50 percent signal strength at least 50 percent of the time from an antenna at least 30 feet tall. Those outside this area are considered unable to receive and acceptable signal. It is not fair that local stations can still deny a waiver request even if a given household is outside the "Grade B" contour when they know this is defined as an unacceptable signal. The merger would put a stop to this, and it would also benefit local stations by ensuring they are getting the maximum amount of viewers possible which will greatly increase the ad revenues stations will see from the extra viewers. Currently, DIRECTV and Dish Network both have over 100 different channels that are duplicated because they both offer them on their separate systems. This is a waste of precious bandwidth and space on these satellites that could be put to better use for the consumers.

(2)

Every American would benefit from broadband access. Since we are now in the information age, it is important to be able to have fast and reliable access to the Internet and information that is at consumers' fingertips. Since this merger would provide every American with high-speed Internet access, everyone would be able to share and disseminate information quickly, send e-mail on the fly, and be able to enjoy the benefits the Internet provides. There are still many areas that do not have local Internet access and consumers have to make a long-distance call just to get logged on, and then they have to pay for the minutes or even hours they spend in long-distance charges in addition to the monthly fee for Internet access at such a slow speed. Since the merger would allow broadband to be used via satellite, no American would ever have to pay these extra telephone charges ever again just to be able to access the Internet. In addition, the high-speed broadband provides would allow for richer content to be provided from web pages and would help e-commerce revenues by getting more consumers to be on the Internet visiting web sites, shopping, etc.

(3)

Expanded High-Definition (HDTV) offerings would benefit consumers by allowing them to take full advantage of the new technology that is available today. Many local channels are beginning to broadcast in HDTV and the merger would allow every local channel in the United States to be carried in HDTV as soon as each station offers it. In addition to the excellent picture quality this service provides, it will revolutionize access to this type of service since it would be available to every American through an approved merger.

(4)

The deletion of duplicate channels offered on both systems, as stated above, would free up more bandwidth and space to offer greater services to all consumers. This would allow a greater line-up of programming available to all Americans. Aside from what very few channels aren't duplicated between DIRECTV and Dish Network (Echostar), the only difference in the two is whom you get your bill from. Everything else is the same, and it is simply nonsense to have two separate companies providing basically the same exact service, wasting bandwidth and satellite space that could be used for local channels and new services. The combined companies through the merger would offer an even better service to all Americans.

(5)

By allowing this merger, satellite companies would finally be able to offer a complete alternative to cable for every American consumer. Currently, cable companies are the ones who have the advantage, because they can offer things such as local channels on each cable system where satellite cannot due to current satellite capacity. It is not fair that satellite is not currently able to be on the same level playing field as cable. This merger would finally level the playing field and make the industry equal once and for all.

In summary, there is no reason not to support this merger. In this merger, consumers have nothing to lose and everything to gain. While some companies may say that this merger will hurt us all, they simply haven't done their homework and research as I stated before. I believe that the merged company will keep prices fair and equitable for all just as they do now and will put consumers first just as they do now. The merger will allow for one standard for receiving equipment, and both DIRECTV and Dish Network have already made a promise to current customers that if a change in equipment is needed, it will be provided at absolutely no charge. This just proves further, the commitment both of these companies have made and continue to make not only to their current customers, but to all Americans to be able to give them a competitive, excellent, and fair alternative in television viewing.

I appreciate your consideration of my views. Your taking the time to read this is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely Yours,

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