

01-348

F. Kenneth Olafson

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Salt Lake City, UT 84119

CL-NR-2002

April 14, 2002

The Honorable John Ashcroft
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

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

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Dear Attorney General Ashcroft and Chairman Powell

I recently read a letter posted on Congressman Chris Cannon's web page (sent to Mr. Ashcroft and Mr. Powell) opposing the EchoStar/Hughes Electronics merger. Apparently it was sent by what they call Western Caucus Members of Congress (WCMC). Reading the position of WCMC members on this issue greatly frustrated me. I spent the first 44 years on our family farm in northeastern North Dakota. I know about rural America, its isolation, lack of opportunities for good jobs, and rural poverty. I have had the same rural experiences as the great Honorable Malcolm Wallop former U.S. Senator from the State of Wyoming and he states the case and my opinions on this issue for rural America eloquently in his Washington Times (Op-Ed) March 21, 2002 piece. I am enclosing a copy.

The proposed merger will open doors to citizens in rural America by providing internet access, local to local programming and pay-for-TV programming that many citizens currently do not have at this time and many in very remote areas will never have. The opposition by the WCMC members to this business proposal could delay access to these new services in states where the service is badly needed. Knowing local politics as I do, I would say that since the Congressmen who signed this letter do not have a vested stake in this issue and it does not adversely affect their district. It is important that elected representatives view the nations interests, and act as Statesmen instead of serving their local selfish interests especially if their constituents are unharmed.

In my research of this business proposal this merger will broaden EchoStar and DIRECTV from 40 to 100 markets. Today, broadband access is available and affordable only for urban and suburban residents reached by cable modem services or the DSL services carried over telephone lines. The merger will permit the new EchoStar to provide a third broadband alternative for those consumers and, more importantly, to

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provide affordable broadband access to rural customers that cable modem and DSL services cannot reach.

To point out how foolish and out of touch the Congressmen are concerning there rural constituents is in the fourth paragraph where they are demeaning the proposal by EchoStar to have a national pricing policy. This is a very important feature of this merger. No other business service or commodity is offered to rural America at the same price as there urban and suburban cousins. A common statement by rural folks is that they pay list price for every thing and pay the freight both ways. For this merger to be a successful business venture the new EchoStar Company will have to price their product competitively in the urban areas to attract the volume of business to make their company successful and rural America will reap the benefits of this competitive pricing. The attitudes expressed in this paragraph also lead me to believe these Congressmen have little knowledge about running a successful business.

We have to recognize that we are in a technology, information society. It is the responsibility of our government leaders to aid every citizen in our American society with the challenge to stay educated and connected. We must support our businesses both urban and rural, and support all our citizens with every opportunity available to improve their communities.

I believe the EchoStar/Hughes Electronics merger is in the best interest of America and urge you expedite the process of approving this merger.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "F. Kenneth Olafson".

F. Kenneth Olafson

Former Member of the North Dakota House of Representatives

cc. all members of the WCMC