

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

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to express my extreme disappointment in the recent FCC decision regarding the EchoStar-DirectTV merger. This short-sighted decision has probably blown the last chance that American consumers will have for a viable alternative to our local market cable monopoly (Time-Warner in my case). By denying this merger, the FCC has left open the door for Mr. Murdoch's News Corp. to acquire DirectTV, and with their superior resources (including horizontal and vertical integration), drive EchoStar out of business. News Corp, with an international satellite monopoly in many countries, is primarily interested in extended that satellite monopoly to this country, and has never expressed sentiments (as has EchoStar) about increasing service options at the expense of some potential revenue. So much for the FCC's reasoning about maintaining consumer choice.

The Cable Monopoly must be ended! Our local cable company decides which local channels to air, and how many hours per day. Our local channels are 'blacked out' in favor of infomercials, that produce revenue for our local cable monopolists, but that deny existing licensed community broadcast outlets access to the cable-connected audience. By denying the EchoStar/DirectTV merger, the FCC has condemned the American consumer to continuous double-digit cable rate hikes, allowing the cable monopolists to determine what channels and networks we may watch, and when. Whatever happened to open access? We have a choice of phone companies and long-distance providers via our phone lines. We even have a choice of internet providers via our cable connection. Why do we still NOT have a choice of cable PROVIDERS via that same cable connection. We may not even choose to view local channels (or cable networks, for that matter) that our single cable content provider chooses NOT to offer us.

What ever happened to competition? What Mr. Powell's FCC is willing to maintain (he says) for that small percentage of Americans in rural areas, he is NOT willing to extend to the American majority of cable-connected urban dwellers. I'd be happy to support a candidate who supports my right for freedom of choice!

Sincerely,

Kris Gray
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