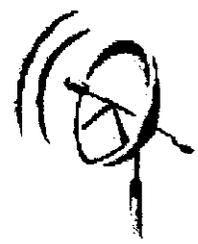


Coalition for RURAL Communications Choice



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Hon. John Ashcroft, Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

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

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NOV - 1 2002

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

REF: CS Docket No. 01-348- EchoStar Communications/Hughes Electronics Merger

Dear Attorney General Ashcroft & Chairman Powell:

As groups vitally interested in competitive communications throughout the nation, we would like to express our strong opposition to the proposed merger of EchoStar Communications Corporation and Hughes Electronics Corporation.

If approved by your agency, this merger would combine the only two sources of multi-channel video programming and broadband Internet access available in most areas of Rural America.

The petitioners claim that their merger will bring true competition to the cable communications market. But 23 million homes in Rural America have no access to cable modem or DSL service. They must depend entirely upon satellite broadband services for their multi-channel TV, Internet, and related communications services. There is little chance of competing firms being established in the near future, since EchoStar and Hughes (DirecTV) hold the licenses to all of the DBS channels.

By permitting the merger of EchoStar Communications and Hughes Electronics, you would hand the resulting conglomerate 91 percent of the U.S. digital satellite TV market. You would reduce the options for these 23 million U.S. homes to a single provider of satellite TV and broadband services. There would be no competition for them in price, technical innovation, or quality of service.

The petitioners propose a "national pricing plan" for their satellite TV monopoly, but experts call such a plan unworkable and unenforceable. Who would monitor the results? Who would be charged with enforcement? We ask that you deny this monopolistic merger, and allow the two petitioners to remain competitive for the benefit of residents in Rural America. Thank you.

Sincerely,

- National Association of Wheat Growers
- The National Grange
- Communicating for Agriculture
- American Agriculture Movement - Texas
- American Agriculture Movement - Arkansas
- Potomac Grange #1
- Colorado State Grange
- Indiana State Grange
- Massachusetts State Grange
- Montana State Grange
- New York State Grange
- Ohio State Grange
- Texas State Grange
- Delaware State Grange
- South Carolina State Grange

- National Rural Housing Coalition
- Agricultural Transporters Conference
- Maryland Dairy Industry Association
- Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
- The Pegasus Group
- California State Grange
- Illinois State Grange
- Iowa State Grange
- Missouri State Grange
- New Hampshire State Grange
- North Carolina State Grange
- Pennsylvania State Grange
- Vermont State Grange
- Milburne & Associates, Inc.
- American Association of Grain Inspection & Weighing Agencies

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