

Giant cable companies should not be permitted to grow larger. Further consolidation in the cable industry is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules that must be re-established to serve the public interest.

The concentration of power and control over distribution of media is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are under the operation of a handful of giant corporations.

This is not only an economic near-monopoly but exercises a huge amount of control over the content of the media we receive—and much of that is over-edited, censored or intellectually unstimulating trash at the present time!

If Comcast and Time Warner are allowed to merge with Adelphia, the two companies will control nearly 50 percent of the national market. This level of concentration in the cable industry will lead to higher consumer rates and lower quality service.

Since passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the “deregulation” of cable, consumers have seen their rates jump an average of 59 percent — with some areas experiencing even more dramatic increases.

We are required to buy channels we don't want or need because the cable operators bundle them together. The quality of customer service often reflects the fact that cable television is not a competitive market.

It is not only very expensive, but I only watch about ten per cent of what I am forced to pay for. The only reason I pay for this is because the commercial networks assume the public has the brains of the average amoeba. Other than the people who run the networks, I do not know any people of whom this is true.

Meanwhile, the cost of cable modem service remains out of reach for many households, holding constant for years and selectively underserving rural and low-income Americans. The American people are watching the digital divide widen even as the need for access to high-speed networks increases.

Cable companies have become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local

franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments.

In many communities, the truly independent sources of local news, information and culture come from the public channels produced at the local access centers. Unfortunately, local channels lack the resources to produce the programming that citizens want and need.

In my community, funding cable access is a constant battle. True, some weird people want to access the media. But does the Constitution say that its protections are only for people not considered "weird" by those who consider themselves "normal?" I don't think so.

The last thing we need is to reward the anti-competitive actions of cable giants by permitting greater consolidation in ownership, reducing competition, and encouraging more of the same.