

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.

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.

I have heard all my life about how healthy it is for our economy to have competition. Allowing a handful of companies to control 50% and more of our media is the antithesis of competition. Just over 100 years ago, there were major battles over corporate monopolization and the people spoke clearly that they were against it. Here we are fighting the same battles. I prefer to have an independent media. I prefer to have different companies representing more voices having access to our public airwaves.

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.

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.

I have seen no evidence of improvement in prices or services in recent years. In fact, I have seen rate hikes, more impersonal, pre-packages services, far fewer choices in entertainment, and so little information in the “news”. I am not satisfied with cable prices and services.

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.

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.