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

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

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.

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.

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