Conglomerate cable companies must not be permitted to further control the market. More consolidation in the cable industry is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules, that should serve the public interest.

Concentrated power and control over media distribution is growing. We have more channels than ever, but they're controlled by a handful of giant corporations.

If Comcast and Time Warner are allowed to merge with Adelphia, the two companies will control nearly 1/2 the national market! This concentration in the cable industry will lead to higher rates and lower quality.

Since the Telecomm. Act of 1996 and "deregulation" of cable, consumer rates jumped an average of 59% -- with some areas experiencing even more dramatic increases!

We have to buy channels we don't want or need, because the cable operators bundle them together. Low customer service quality comes with non-competitive cable t.v. Meanwhile, cable modem service stays unattainable for many households, with rural and low-income Americans selectively underserved. The digital divide widens even as the need for access to high-speed networks increases.

And cable companies are now less responsive to community needs. Public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies can pressure local governments. In many communities, truly independent local news, information and culture come from the public channels produced at the local access centers. But local channels lack the resources to keep audiences.

We must not reward anti-competive actions of cable giants by permitting -- and encouraging -- greater ownership consolidation and reducing competition.