

My main concern with the proposed merger of Comcast and NBC Universal is retransmission rights for Comcast competitors. In the past we have seen many times that broadcast affiliates have played hard ball with retransmission rights and have threatened and pulled their broadcast from cable and satellite providers.

NBC could still do this after the merger but the real question is would NBC programming ever be pulled from a Comcast owned cable system? Or would Comcast be given favorable treatment during rebroadcast negotiations? This merger would put Comcast at a real competitive advantage over other cable and satellite providers as they could pull broadcast programming from those competitors while not having to worry about the same happening on Comcast cable systems.

A condition of the merger should be that NBC not be allowed to pull programming from any cable or satellite provider during negotiations.

Other points of concern is that Comcast owned cable Internet systems will give preferential treatment to NBC programming and Comcast Internet customers. This could not only included restricting priority of competitors programming and web sites but allowing Comcast Internet customer free access to some programming while requiring others to pay for it. This already happens in some cases now and could greatly expand when a cable operator also owns the programming. This is anti-competitive.

A condition of the merger should be that all internet traffic be treated equally for Comcast cable Internet subscribers and if programming is free over the Internet for Comcast customers it has to be provided free for all Internet users.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns with the proposed merger of Comcast and NBC Universal.

Harold Hagquist