The FCC and Department of Justice should block Comcast's acquisition of Time Warner Cable as it would reduce the competition in a market that already has too few competitors and concentrate too much market power in the hands of one company. The combined company would provide cable-TV service to nearly 30 percent of American homes and high-speed Internet service to nearly 40 percent. Even without this merger and the proposed AT&T-DirecTV deal, the telecommunications industry has limited competition, especially in the critical market for high-speed Internet service, or broadband, where consumer choice usually means picking between the local cable or phone company. At the end of 2012, according to the F.C.C., 64 percent of American homes had only one or at most two choices for Internet service that most people would consider broadband. Wireless services can handle streaming video, but many customers of Verizon or AT&T would blow through their monthly wireless data plan by streaming just one two-hour high-definition movie, at which point they would have to fork over extra fees.

By buying Time Warner Cable, Comcast would become a gatekeeper over what consumers watch, read and listen to. The company would have more power to compel Internet content companies like Netflix and Google, which owns YouTube, to pay Comcast for better access to its broadband network. Netflix, a dominant player in video streaming, has already signed such an agreement with the company. This could put start-ups and smaller companies without deep pockets at a competitive disadvantage.

Comcast would have more power to refuse to carry channels that compete with programming owned by NBC Universal, which it owns.

This merger would fundamentally change the structure of this important industry and give one company too much control over what information, shows, movies and sports Americans can access on TVs and the Internet. Federal regulators should challenge this deal.