

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing in support of the proposed merger between Echostar's Dish Network and DirecTV. As a subscriber in a market which has no cable competition, I have seen subscription prices of local cable services increase dramatically over the last few years. The merger would provide a viable competitor to the national Comcast franchise located here, and 'encourage' them to price their services competitively rather than monopolistically. Local-to-local service, something the merger would facilitate, is a requirement for viable competition. The current FCC rules protect television station revenues at the expense of the public. Though I am less than 15 miles from the network towers for my local stations, geography prevents clear reception (or ANY reception, in some cases) -- even with an antenna elevated 30 feet above the ground. Nevertheless, because the FCC's criteria does not actually consider whether station reception is viewable but only deals with whether a signal is theoretically at a certain level, I am forced to subscribe to cable to receive local channels.

The goal of the FCC should be to provide competition between like entities. Currently, satellite providers are hamstrung and seriously disadvantaged in their efforts to compete with cable companies. The cable industry would have you believe that, in spite of the restrictions on local programming, satellite providers are on a level playing field. In reality, most cable markets have no competition which can provide the same level of service -- not for technological reasons, but because of legislative restrictions on satellite providers.

Please level the playing field and provide rural Americans the same access to cable-like services, and provide urban Americans with viable alternatives to local cable monopolies. Approve the merger.

Sincerely,

Howard Hartsfield
2795 Armistead Rd
Tallahassee, FL 32308