



November 17, 2006

United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

In light of the recent federal court injunction against Echostar Communications' transmission of distant network signals to all of its satellite television customers, Consumers Union is concerned that hundreds of thousands of rural consumers who were legally receiving distant networks from Echostar will be left without affordable access to broadcast television programming. Moreover, we are concerned that, with only one other satellite television provider available, rural consumers will be left without meaningful marketplace choice and that competition may be irreparably harmed.

Customers who live in "white areas" and who were legally receiving distant broadcast networks from Echostar should not be penalized for the company's wrongful acts. Yet it is likewise essential the company not be immunized from the legal repercussions of violating the Satellite Home Viewer Extension and Reauthorization Act and that it be provided with strong incentives to both comply with the law and provide local-into-local service so that Echostar subscribers receive the benefit of local broadcast news. Consumers Union therefore supports timely passage of legislation that would balance the need to protect rural consumers and promote greater access to local broadcast coverage with strong provisions that deter current and future violations of statutory requirements relating to distant signal transmission.

It is essential that Congress act to address this important issue prior to December 1, the date on which Echostar's subscribers in white areas will lose distant broadcast networks. Please feel to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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