



Alliance for Community Media

Promoting Civic Engagement Through Community Media

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Community Media Groups and Common Cause Ask the FCC to Stop the AT&T DirecTV Deal

Minneapolis (September 16, 2014) - The Alliance for Community Media, the Alliance for Communications Democracy and Common Cause today asked the Federal Communications Commission to block the deal for AT&T to acquire DirecTV. The groups say the deal is misguided and will further hurt local media and PEG channels throughout the U.S.

In their joint petition to deny, the groups outline both the flaws of the transaction and the inability of AT&T to support public interest requirements such as PEG Access channels. “Having justified its promotion of state video franchising laws with the promise that it would bring landline, cable-based competition to incumbent cable operators, AT&T through this transaction now apparently seeks to renege on that promise by fleeing to DIRECTV’s DBS service. The Commission should not reward that bait-and-switch.”

The groups argue that AT&T would better serve consumers by improving the quality of its U-verse video service, or by investing in broadband buildout rather than further reducing video competition. “AT&T’s current 5.7 million U-verse video subscriber figure may represent lower penetration than AT&T would like, but that is itself a product of competition. The proper, and pro-competitive, solution to AT&T’s disappointing U-verse video penetration problem is to improve the price or quality of its U-verse video and bundled offerings.”

The groups also say the transaction will cause irreparable harm to PEG channels across the U.S. by rewarding AT&T’s treatment of PEG channels with its inferior Channel 99 “solution” for local program channels. AT&T’s U-verse makes it more difficult for viewers to find PEG channels and make recording individual programs for later viewing impossible. “These defects impose a crippling handicap on PEG channel viewership, as video surveys indicate what common sense should tell you: a major factor in channel viewership on an MVPD system is subscribers’ ability to find a channel and to record the channel’s programs to view at their conveniences.”

The ACM, ACD and Common Cause Petition to Deny can be found here:

www.allcommunitymedia.org/policy-advocacy/fcc

ACM is a national nonprofit membership organization representing over 3,000 public, educational and governmental (“PEG”) access organizations and community media centers, and PEG programmers throughout the nation. Those PEG organizations and centers include more than 1.2 million volunteers and 250,000 community groups that provide PEG access television programming in local communities across the United States.

ACD is a national membership organization of nonprofit PEG organizations that supports efforts to protect the rights of the public to communicate via cable television, and promotes the availability of the widest possible diversity of information sources and services to the public.

Common Cause is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to restoring the core values of American democracy, reinventing an open, honest, and accountable government that works for the public interest, and empowering ordinary people to make their voices heard. Its 400,000 members are organized in 35 state chapters.

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