

**MEDIA ACCESS PROJECT INITIATES JUDICIAL
CHALLENGE TO AT&T/COMCAST MERGER**



**MAP Lawyers To Bring Immediate Suit On Behalf of
Consumer and Public Interest Organizations**

**Groups Object to FCC's Acquiescence In Hiding Key Documents; Warn that Action
Will Increase Rates, Decrease Program Diversity, Threaten Internet "As We Know It"**

Media Access Project ("MAP") has announced that it will file suit to challenge today's FCC decision approving Comcast's acquisition of AT&T's cable television systems. The appeal will be filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit on behalf of Consumers Union, Consumer Federation of America and the Center for Digital Democracy as soon as the full text of the Commission's decision is available. Other public interest groups which had objected to the merger are expected to join the case later.

MAP, a thirty-year old public interest telecommunications law firm, will ask the court to expedite action on the appeal, and that the case be heard in conjunction with a related case filed on November 7 challenging the FCC's refusal to require AT&T and Comcast to file their contract with AOL/Time Warner giving AOL/Time Warner the right to provide high speed internet service to some of Comcast's cable customers.

Cheryl Leanza, MAP's Deputy Director, charged that the merger of the largest and third largest cable companies will exacerbate their monopoly power and permit them to will increase cable TV rates while decreasing diversity of program offerings. "The FCC's own data shows that regional "clustering" permitted by this decision leads to increased prices and gives the company greater power to reject popular programming choices," she said.

The action also threatens the freedom and openness of the Internet. According to MAP Associate Director Harold Feld, Comcast's still-secret deal with AOL/Time Warner "jeopardizes, quite literally, the Internet as we know it today." He expressed amazement that

The FCC Commissioners approved the merger without looking at, much less considering, the impact of the Comcast-AOL/Time Warner deal. We don't know for sure, but it is quite likely that this contract prohibits AOL/Time Warner from using the Internet to deliver TV programming that might compete with Comcast's cable TV service. This and other rumored provisions will inhibit artistic expression, reduce competition and deny users the unrestricted Internet access we have come to accept as commonplace.

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