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Megamerger, megaquestions

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[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract:

Take for instance its hypocritical call for open access to high-speed cable lines (a problem the Time Warner deal will go a long way toward solving) while at the same time blocking access by competitors' customers to its instant messaging system.

Full text:

AOL-Time Warner deal raises several red flags. The feds need to give the merger a careful look.

The conventional wisdom among analysts is that the mammoth America Online-Time Warner merger announced this week should pass through the federal government's anti-trust filter unscathed. The two conglomerates are so different, their businesses so complementary, that their marriage should result in

no restraint of trade.

But the merger, the largest in U.S. history, raises concerns - for consumers, for competitors, for Congress - that go far beyond anti-trust considerations. Key members of Congress have already promised hearings on the \$183 billion pairing of the nation's largest Internet service provider and one of its dominant media and entertainment empires. While they're at it, Congress should also follow through on earlier promises to revisit the 1996 Telecom Reform Act, which set the stage for the AOL-Time Warner deal and dozens of other massive mergers.

The telecom act has fallen short of its promise to lower consumer costs and increase choice. It has led to massive media and telecommunications consolidation and, in the case of such industries as cable television, dramatically higher prices.

America Online's policies and practices have long angered consumers, as well as privacy advocates. Take for instance its hypocritical call for open access to high-speed cable lines (a problem the Time Warner deal will go a long way toward solving) while at the same time blocking access by competitors' customers to its instant messaging system. Its routine eavesdropping on customers' e-mail, chat room conversations and instant messages is also a concern.

Another troubling aspect of the merger is the further consolidation of ownership in the mass media. If the deal is approved, AOL will own HBO, TBS, TNT, CNN, as well as Time, Sports Illustrated and Fortune magazines.

The merger will likely be poked and prodded by several federal agencies - including the Justice Department now proposing a breakup of the Microsoft monopoly. And it will be weighed by a Congress increasingly feeling the heat from impatient consumers wondering when the Telecom Reform Act will begin to live up to its promises.

The exploding Internet is changing the ground rules of business every day. Federal regulators must do their best to keep up. Business; Corporation; Merger; Business; Corporation; Antitrust; Consumer; Consumer Protection; Privacy America Online; Time Warner Inc. Northeast

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