



Opinion

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AOL – Time Warner merger proves that Microsoft is no threat

BY TOM C. LANDRETH FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The recently announced AOL-Time Warner mega-merger proves that the government never had a serious case against Microsoft; and even if its case once had a small kernel of truth, the marketplace and computer and Internet technology are progressing so rapidly that the government's case is now moot.

The AOL-Time Warner merger will break all records with its total estimated value of nearly \$350 billion. It will combine AOL, the largest Internet provider in the world and owner of Netscape software, with Time Warner's vast system of broadband Internet technology as well as its media, entertainment and news services. The new AOL Time Warner Company will dwarf most of its competition and will have the resources to take on virtually any project or competitor it chooses. With these facts in mind, how can the government continue to argue that Microsoft exercised monopoly power to bully AOL out of the market?

For the past year and a half, government attorneys warned us in grave tones that Microsoft was and is using its market to hamper its competitors and harm consumers. These charges rang hollow then, but

in light of the recently announced mega-merger, the charges have been exposed for the absurdity that they are.

The public should have sensed that it was about to be sucker-punched when the government's attorneys promised to protect us from Microsoft's free and very popular Internet Explorer and Outlook Express. Consumers don't need protection from high quality, free software. However, Americans do need protection from a Justice Department that wastes tax dollars, cheapens the law, and abuses government power to benefit some competitors while harming others. Given the rapid development of technology and swift changes in the marketplace, government attempts to regulate the high tech computer and Internet market will be ineffectual and irrelevant—at best. At worst, such meddling will impede innovation and halt economic growth. In either event, citizens and consumers would be the hardest hit.

The government claims that Microsoft is one of the most powerful and predatory monopolies ever known. Moreover it now argues that the only solution is to impose the "death penalty" on Microsoft placing the Software Company in the government's corporate guillotine—

to be broken up into two or three pieces. Before imposing such a drastic sentence, a brief look at the facts is in order. AOL has the market power and resources to purchase Time Warner in the largest merger ever.

This mega-merger provides ample proof that there is, and will continue to be, an abundance of competition in the high tech computer and Internet arena. Government lawsuits are not needed to promote competition. Such lawsuits only endanger the dynamic and rapidly advancing high tech economy. Simply stated, it is time for the government to stop its jihad against Microsoft.

One is left to wonder why the government continues to waste its time and the taxpayer's money relentlessly pursuing Microsoft and trying to impose the corporate death penalty. AOL is obviously thriving. Microsoft has not harmed or hampered AOL. In fact, one could now plausibly argue that a large, healthy Microsoft is needed as a counterbalance to the new mega Internet firm AOL Time Warner.

If the government lacks the judgment to drop its lawsuit against Microsoft, then Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson should dismiss the government's case as moot and let the competition and innovation continue. Consumers will be the biggest winners.

Report recognizes the importance of treating mental illness

BY BARRY S. KAST, M.S.W., BARRY S. KAST FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

I was privileged in December to be a part of what I hope was the beginning of and to stigma and discrimination toward people with mental illness. I attended a news conference in Washington, D.C., at which Surgeon General David Satcher made public his extensive and groundbreaking report concluding that mental illness is diagnosable and treatable, and that mental health is as essential as physical health to overall quality of life. Mental health professionals have been waiting for years for science and government policy makers to catch up and embrace the knowledge that treatment of mental illness is a public health issue just as important as treatment of other illness such as cancer with the report were a magic that could instantly erase centuries of stigma and embarrassment suffered by people with mental illness. Unfortunately, we have a long way to go, even with Dr. Satcher's summary of the scientific evidence that effective treatment exist for most mental disorders.

Stigma is difficult to overcome, partly because people with mental illness such as bipolar and schizophrenic disorders often display behaviors that frighten the public and lead to rejection. People often hide their illness and don't seek help. Private insurance often discriminates by offering limited coverage for treatment services, adding financial disincentives to seeking care.

Commercial insurance companies and Medicare provide only bare-bones coverage for serious and disabling mental illness that falls far short of the treatment needed, particularly for children and the elderly.

Letter to the editor

To the Editor:

Lets encourage students to achieve excellence in the New Year! As an incentive, tell them about the Independence Essay Competition, which will award up to \$5,000 to Oregon high school students for the best essays on the foundation of freedom.

Organized by Cascade Policy Institute, the sixth annual Essay

Competition is open to all Oregon public, private, and homeschool students of high school-age (winners to date include sophomores and juniors, as well as seniors). Students compete only against their in-state peers.

To receive the guidelines interested persons should call (503) 242-0900, or review them at www.CascadePolicy.org. The deadline for entering is March 15.

The Independence Essay Competition is an opportunity for Oregon students to be recognized and rewarded for extracurricular academic excellence. Please spread the word!

Sincerely,
Angela Eckhardt
Program Coordinator
Cascade Policy Institute
Portland, Oregon

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