

Daystar, Familynet Removed from Dish Network

Two Christian TV networks can no longer be seen on the nation's second largest satellite TV provider.

Daystar and FamilyNet were removed from DISH Network Sept. 17 after an arbitration panel unanimously ruled that DISH's parent company, EchoStar Communications Corp., must comply with a 1996 contract it made with Dominion Sky Angel, the nation's only Christian direct-to satellite TV service.

The agreement forbids EchoStar from broadcasting any Christian channels on DISH Network besides Dominion's Angel One network, and Trinity Broadcasting Network and Eternal Word Television Network, which were airing on DISH before the contract was made. Dominion also was awarded more than \$3 million for past economic damages and legal fees, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported.

The dispute stems from an April 2003 breach-of-contract lawsuit that Dominion filed against EchoStar after it began airing Daystar and FamilyNet. The networks fought to remain on DISH, which is said to reach 25 million homes, leading to a heated dispute between Daystar and Dominion in particular.

Roughly a month before the arbitration panel's ruling, Dominion founder Robert W. Johnson Sr. died of heart failure Aug. 5 at the age 66. His son, Robert Johnson Jr., is serving as Dominion's interim CEO.

“It is our desire to put this issue behind us and move forward in obedience to the vision that the Lord has given for this important work of ministry,” the younger Johnson said.

Before Daystar and FamilyNet were removed from DISH, Daystar founder Marcus Lamb said he hoped Dominion would “do not necessarily what is legally right, but what is spiritually and Scripturally right and allow Daystar and FamilyNet to stay on the DISH Network so we can continue to win souls on that secular platform.”

Though he said FamilyNet was disappointed with the ruling, Chip Turner, vice president of marketing and distribution, noted that his network had increased the number of cable outlets on which it is carried by 100 percent.

EchoStar spokesman Steve Caulk said the company believed the ruling was unjustified and planned to appeal.

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