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AT&T, TV Debate Continues

October 27, 2007

In response to the Oct. 25 editorial "Ruling Protects Cable Cartel":

The rules for competition in the cable TV industry are clear. The Federal Cable Act requires cable companies to compete over their entire franchise or service area. An Oct. 3 federal court decision applied this law to AT&T's video service (U-verse), viewing it essentially as the same service provided by the cable companies. The Department of Public Utility Control has also decided correctly that it is required to apply the federal law as interpreted by this federal court decision. In this instance, state law does not trump the federal law.

To allow one company to cherry-pick for service only the most profitable areas of a state is patently unfair to those companies required to serve everyone and to those Connecticut consumers who will not be served. This is the heart of the issue if one cares to look past the political and public relations blitzkrieg currently bombarding us.

Further, to threaten employees with the possible loss of their jobs and elected officials with the loss of economic development revenues in order to garner their support is harmful to our state and its citizens. Refusing to comply with federal law and then blaming state agencies that are fulfilling their statutory mandate by upholding that law is wrong and clearly not the behavior one expects from a good corporate citizen. Contrast this with another major telecom company, Verizon, which has told the DPUC that it will comply with whatever the law requires.

AT&T has the ability right now to resolve this controversy by filing for a franchise application with the DPUC to continue to roll out U-verse. My office urges and encourages AT&T to follow that advice so that consumers can benefit from the promise of real competition in this industry.

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