

# Bell, AT&T deal faces flak in Washington

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Telecom analysts are looking to Washington for signs of possible trouble ahead for AT&T's blockbuster acquisition of BellSouth.

The \$67 billion deal is impressive in its scope, but there are some concerns Tuesday about the impact the merger might have on consumers as the presidential campaign takes shape.

"It's a hot-button issue and we're entering another political season. Look at the Dubai ports deal. I can see Chuck Schumer and Hillary Clinton on the podium now asking, 'Why not let (the two companies) compete with each other instead of merging?'" John Orrico, manager of the Arbitrage fund, told the San Francisco Chronicle.

The deal has also raised the distinct likelihood that several thousand workers could lose their jobs and the chances that other major telcos will join forces as well.

Nevertheless, most analysts have told U.S. media that they expect the acquisition to be approved by regulators within a year based on the recent approval of SBC's acquisition of AT&T and the Verizon-MCI merger.

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