

AT&T files program complaint against Cablevision

August 13 2009, By JOELLE TESSLER , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- AT&T Inc. has filed a complaint with federal regulators charging that Cablevision Systems Corp. is violating federal law by denying AT&T's video customers in Connecticut access to Cablevision's New York area sports programming in high-definition format.

In a filing with the Federal Communications Commission, AT&T alleges that Cablevision is acting in an unfair and anticompetitive manner by denying AT&T U-verse, a competing video service, access to the high-definition format of its Madison Square Garden networks.

Those networks broadcast the games of the New York Knicks, New York Rangers, New York Islanders and New Jersey Devils. Cablevision owns the Knicks and Rangers and holds the broadcast rights to the other teams.

AT&T launched U-verse in Connecticut in December of 2006 and currently offers the service in a number of markets throughout the state. In its complaint, the company argues that Cablevision is abusing its control over popular programming to put its competitors at a disadvantage.

Verizon Communications Inc., which is rolling out its own FiOS TV service, filed a similar complaint against Cablevision with the FCC last month.

Both AT&T and Verizon had already petitioned the FCC for access to

the Madison Square Garden networks in standard-definition format, which is delivered by satellite, and later reached agreements with Cablevision for that programming.

In a statement, Cablevision said that even though AT&T customers already receive all Madison Square Garden network games, the company now wants access to the programming in high definition, which is "a product of many years of technological development and investment."

"AT&T is late to the game and doesn't want to play by the rules... The idea that a phone company more than 15 times our size needs a regulatory bailout is absurd," the statement said.

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Citation: AT&T files program complaint against Cablevision (2009, August 13) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-08-att-complaint-cablevision.html>

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