

# AT&T complains Google Voice blocks calls it can't (Update)

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In this screen shot provided by Google, a Google Voice inbox is shown. (AP Photo/Google)

(AP) -- AT&T Inc. said Friday that Google Inc.'s Internet phone program gets an unfair advantage from blocking calls to rural communities where local carriers charge high connection fees.

In a letter to federal regulators, AT&T said Google Voice keeps costs low by refusing to connect calls to places where some local carriers give phone numbers to adult chat lines and conference-calling services to draw long distance calls. They share hefty connection fees AT&T must pay.

Dallas, Texas-based AT&T, however, has been barred by the Federal Communications Commission from blocking such calls. The high fees force AT&T to raise prices for all of its customers, while Google can

offer calls through the Google Voice software at very low rates.

Google Voice gives people an additional phone number that's not tied to any one phone line. People can program the service to direct incoming calls to their cell phone, home or work numbers. Users can get e-mail transcripts of voice mails through the service. It can also be used to send text messages and place calls - even international ones - at low rates paid to Google, not the carriers, though those calls do use cell phone plan minutes.

AT&T said that Google should not be exempt from the ban because Google Voice "appears to be nothing more than a creatively packaged assortment of services that are already quite familiar to the commission."

AT&T's letter also hammered on what it saw as a contradiction between call blocking and Google's support for "net neutrality," the idea that all types of data are treated equally by both wired and wireless Internet service providers.

In a blog post, Mountain View, Calif.-based Google said it isn't a traditional phone carrier, so it's not subject to the call-blocking ban. It also made the case that it's not a direct competitor to AT&T because [Google Voice](#) users still must have a land line or a mobile phone to use the service.

Google also objected to the net neutrality argument because the Web search leader is not a service provider.

AT&T asked the FCC to stop rural carriers from boosting incoming calls and charging high fees, or in the absence of such a decision, to hold [Google](#) accountable to the same rules.

[FCC](#) spokeswoman Jen Howard said the commission had received

AT&T's letter and is reviewing it.

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