

AT&T, Verizon end lawsuits over cell ads

December 2 2009, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- AT&T Inc. and Verizon Wireless agreed Wednesday to end lawsuits accusing each other of lying in TV ads, taking their rivalry out of the court system for now.

AT&T Inc. agreed to dismiss a lawsuit that sought to force Verizon to pull its "There's a Map for That" commercials. Verizon agreed to dismiss a suit that sought a declaration that AT&T's claims of "more bars in more places" was inaccurate.

Verizon's lawsuit was filed in July, just after AT&T complained to the National Advertising Division of the Council for Better Business Bureaus about Verizon ads claiming that it has "America's most reliable wireless network." That is the usual forum for disputes about advertising, but when Verizon filed a lawsuit, that process was suspended.

With Wednesday's actions, it appears that the companies have agreed to scale back their dispute to stay out of court. The companies would not comment on their reasons.

AT&T filed its [lawsuit](#) in federal court in Atlanta early in November, saying that Verizon's "Map" ads are misleading and amount to deceptive trade practices.

The ads show maps of the United States with areas highlighted to depict where third-generation, or 3G, data network coverage is available. Verizon's coverage, in red, is clearly wider than AT&T's, in blue.

AT&T said those maps could mislead viewers because it's not obvious that it has regular voice coverage and slower data service in many areas where it doesn't offer 3G.

Two weeks ago, a judge tossed out AT&T's request for a temporary restraining order and a permanent injunction to stop the ads, but scheduled a hearing to give the AT&T attorneys another chance to make their case.

The slogan "There's a Map for That" plays off Apple Inc.'s "There's an App for That" ads for the iPhone, which tout the thousands of applications available for the phone. AT&T is the sole U.S. carrier for the iPhone.

In response to Verizon's ads, AT&T has launched an ad campaign with actor Luke Wilson saying AT&T has the "the nation's fastest 3G network."

And given the lack of standards to identify which network is the "fastest" or "most reliable," the competing claims are likely to continue.

[Verizon Wireless](#) is a joint venture of New York-based Verizon Communications Inc. and Vodafone Group PLC of Britain.

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