

AT&T and some of Georgia's cable operators are rightly under attack by telephone customers outraged to learn of **a plan** to force two independent phone companies to raise their rates because some think they charge too little.

Residents packed the Chickamauga Civic Center Monday night to loudly protest an effort by AT&T and the Georgia Cable TV Association to force both Chickamauga and Ringgold Telephone to raise their rates, in some cases by 100 percent.

"We're here today because another company has complained about Chickamauga Telephone rates [claiming] that they are too low," said Chickamauga city superintendent of schools Melody Day. "Maybe it's just that their rates are too high."

Retirees complained the rate increases demanded by AT&T and cable operators were unaffordable, with residential customers facing hikes of 42% for phone service. AT&T claims both phone companies are subsidizing their rates with money from the Universal Service Fund to an artificially low level. AT&T rates are considerably higher, and now AT&T wants the two independents to raise their rates accordingly.

If AT&T has their way with the Georgia Public Service Commission, Chickamauga residential customers currently paying \$13.30 per month will be billed \$18.83 per month for basic phone service with a limited local calling area. Business customer rates would double from \$20.40 to \$40.80 per month.