

What about Net Neutrality?

And though the big phone and cable companies have done their best to ensure our government looks the other way when they abuse their market power, the FCC did manage to enact a Net Neutrality rule in December 2010 that, [while weak](#), still should prohibit AT&T from screwing over iPhone customers this way.

The FCC's rule explicitly says mobile Internet service providers are not allowed to "block applications that compete with the provider's voice or video telephony services." And here we have AT&T prohibiting their customers from using a video telephony service unless they first pay AT&T *more money* -- not for more data, but for AT&T's voice and text services.

It's pretty much an open-and-shut case that this latest move is a Net Neutrality violation.

So why would AT&T even go this route? Though AT&T's reputation as a regulatory puppet master has taken a hit in recent months (contrast its failed union with T-Mobile with Verizon's [current dalliance](#) with the cable cartel), its political influence is still strong in Washington.

And AT&T -- which tepidly endorsed the FCC's Net Neutrality rules when they were approved -- understands that if it can get the FCC to condone this kind of Net Neutrality violation, then they can get away with just about anything.

(Verizon again has taken a more direct route to the same goal -- suing the FCC and claiming the agency lacks the authority to make any rules at all.)