

For two years, AT&T was verbally hung in print effigy for its attempt to provide a competitive marketplace to all consumers, irrespective of wealth or residence. In its endeavor to launch U-verse and provide a choice to all Wisconsin consumers, AT&T was demonized (primarily) by its competition and political cronies, as an uncaring corporate behemoth that wanted to exert its will on the Wisconsin populace. Fortunately, the Wisconsin Legislature looked beyond the rhetoric and made a logical decision that benefited the Wisconsin consumer.

This week, the Wisconsin State Journal's Editorial Board acknowledged the benefit of AT&T's efforts. Please read the following and note that this is just one more example why buying decisions should be governed by "total value" – the product or service and the company that provides it.

<http://www.madison.com/toolbox/index.php?action=printme&ref=archives&storyURL=/archives/read.php?ref=/wsj/2008/12/15/0812130070.php>

Tv Competition Helps Consumers

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AT&T announced in July it would soon offer its U-verse television service in Madison. The package would include the Big Ten Network, which many Badger fans were clamoring for.

A few weeks later, Charter Communications suddenly reached a long-stalled deal with the Big Ten Network to offer its sports programming as well.

Coincidence?

Hardly.

The injection of competition into the Madison television market put additional pressure on Charter to provide a better product or risk losing business.

That's just one example of how a new state law encouraging greater competition in the television market is benefiting consumers.

Since the law was enacted earlier this year, a bunch of telephone companies - not just AT&T - have signed up for and received state franchises to provide television service across the state. The bipartisan law is making it easier for providers to enter and expand in the marketplace. And that is resulting in more choice for consumers.

Many consumers can choose between cable, satellite and phone companies for their television service. They also are being courted with financial incentives and deals that serve to hold down prices.

Yes, Charter recently raised its prices. But it's also advertising deals if you bundle your TV with your phone and Internet service. AT&T and other competitors are following suit with their own deals.

Greater competition is undoubtedly holding prices lower than they otherwise would be.

Opponents of making it easier for competitors to enter the market predicted public access stations would be shut out.

They haven't been.

Opponents suggested AT&T would erect giant metal boxes conspicuously in front of people's homes.

They haven't.

Opponents claimed AT&T would shun low-income neighborhoods.

That's not happening.

But if you've checked your mailbox lately, you've probably seen the glossy flyers offering deals on bundles including television service and expanded options.

More people want your business, so more choice and benefits are coming your way.