

# I DO BELIEVE I SMELL A PR CAMPAIGN

AT&T wants something from you. They want immunity from prosecution for breaking existing laws on customer privacy. They want more bandwidth. They want to eliminate net neutrality. They may well want to suck up another company or two, to return to the good old days of MaBell. They want to be the exclusive provider to iPhone customers. And these are all just the issues on the front burner.

Thing is, we're beginning to catch onto their plans. It has not escaped our notice that AT&T has been planting its allies in all corners of the Federal government just in time to make policy decisions that will make AT&T rich!

Which is why, I suspect, that AT&T has launched into PR mode. They responded somewhat expeditiously when the tech sites noticed that their Terms of Service prevented you from saying anything mean about them.

T&T has altered the language in its reviled TOS to say it thinks it's okay for people to speak their mind. Really, they hard-wired that into the legalese:

*AT&T respects freedom of expression and believes it is a foundation of our free society to express differing points of view. AT&T will not terminate, disconnect or suspend service because of the views you or we express on public policy matters, political issues or political campaigns.*

That's very sweet of them to say. Really. Though, we're skeptical of how well, "But it says right here, they respect the freedom of expression as a

foundation of a free society!" would hold up in court...

The new language doesn't seem to fully constitute the "make[ing] clear that we do not terminate service because a customer expresses their opinion about AT&T" they promised last week. The term "Public policy" always refers to government actions. We don't see where it explicitly says AT&T will not terminate your contract if you criticize aspects of AT&T's service.

And apparently, they dubbed last week customer service week, with posters and daily slogans and the like (a little birdy sent me this).

I hope you will all take advantage of the opportunity created by National Customer Service Week to spend a few minutes thinking about why service excellence is so crucial to our success and the role you play every day in making it happen. Thanks for all you do every day to remind our customers that at AT&T, *The Customer Rules!*

Next time you're fighting with AT&T about your bill, just remember, the Customer Rules!

We're going to win these fights as much on the PR fight as we will in Congress. So remember—not matter whether you rule or not, AT&T is still aiming to get immunity for violating your privacy and to make it harder for you to surf the web.