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MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Cable TV Rules Defended

Montgomery County officials defended their system of regulating cable television providers yesterday and said that Verizon Communications, a telephone company now venturing into video, doesn't want to operate under rules that apply to others.

The comments came in response to a lawsuit filed Thursday in which Verizon alleges that Montgomery's regulatory system violates federal law and the First Amendment and prevents Montgomery's consumers from increased competition that would lower rates.

Montgomery Chief Administrative Officer Bruce Romer said that Verizon had not submitted a formal franchise application. "They are challenging a process which applies to their competitors but which they have not yet officially entered," he said in a statement.

Council member Marilyn Praisner (D-Eastern County), who chairs the committee that oversees cable franchises, said the lawsuit represents "Verizon's attempt to influence federal legislation. It is about eradicating the role of local government."

— **Cameron W. Barr**