



# MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

*Utility Consumer Complaints  
Semi-Annual Review  
January – June 2012*

The first half of 2012 found the Complaints Bureau adjusting to staff changes. After close to 9 years of service to the State of Montana, Phillip Cooke retired and moved back to North Carolina. The first half of the year ended with just Tina Shorten and Lori Sandru handling the functions of the Complaints Bureau.

In addition to processing complaints and inquiries received by this office, staff in the Complaints Bureau also participated in formal dockets that had consumer impact, attended National Regulatory Research Institute (NRRI) teleseminars, participated in State National Action Plan (SNAP) and National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) conference calls, helped facilitate the transition for carriers to the new Federal rules for the Lifeline program, and monitored activity both at the state and federal level to keep informed of issues that affect Montana consumers.

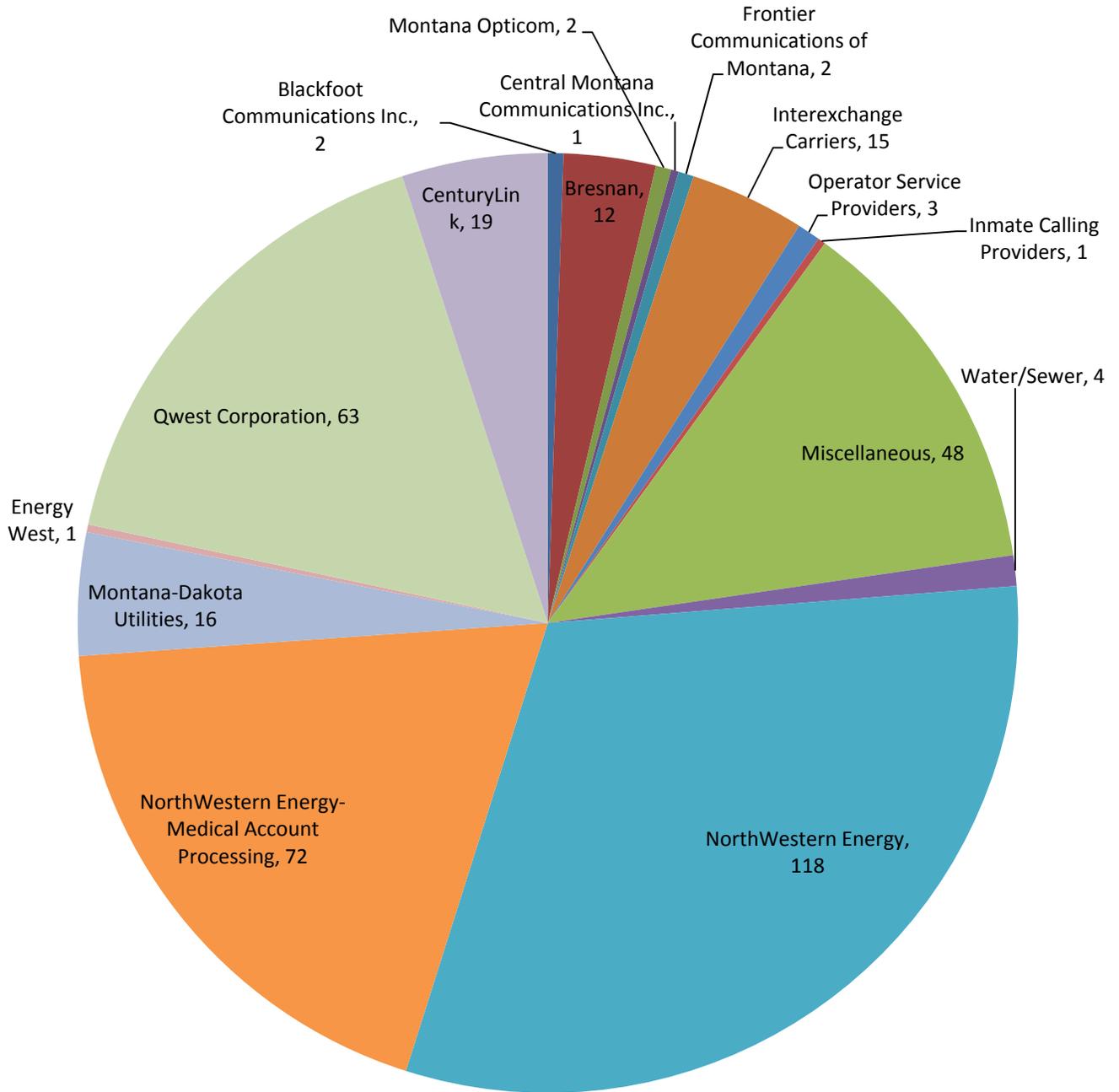
In the first half of 2012 (through June 24), incoming calls to the toll-free complaint line totalled 3724. Consumers are also able to contact our office by other means, including using the online complaint form on our website (37 complaints were received using this method), US postal service (38 complaints), and walk-ins (3 complaints). Of the 3802 documented contacts made to this office, 379 resulted in complaints being entered into the tracking database; 207 were regarding energy, 120 were regarding telecommunications, 48 were miscellaneous, and 4 were water/sewer.

If Complaints Bureau staff contacts a utility company to attempt resolution of a consumer's issue, the matter is entered into our tracking database and is considered a complaint for reporting purposes. Complaints also include the miscellaneous category. Those are consumer contacts that don't require utility company contact, but do require research and response. If an inquiry can be answered without utility contact or research it is not entered into the tracking database.

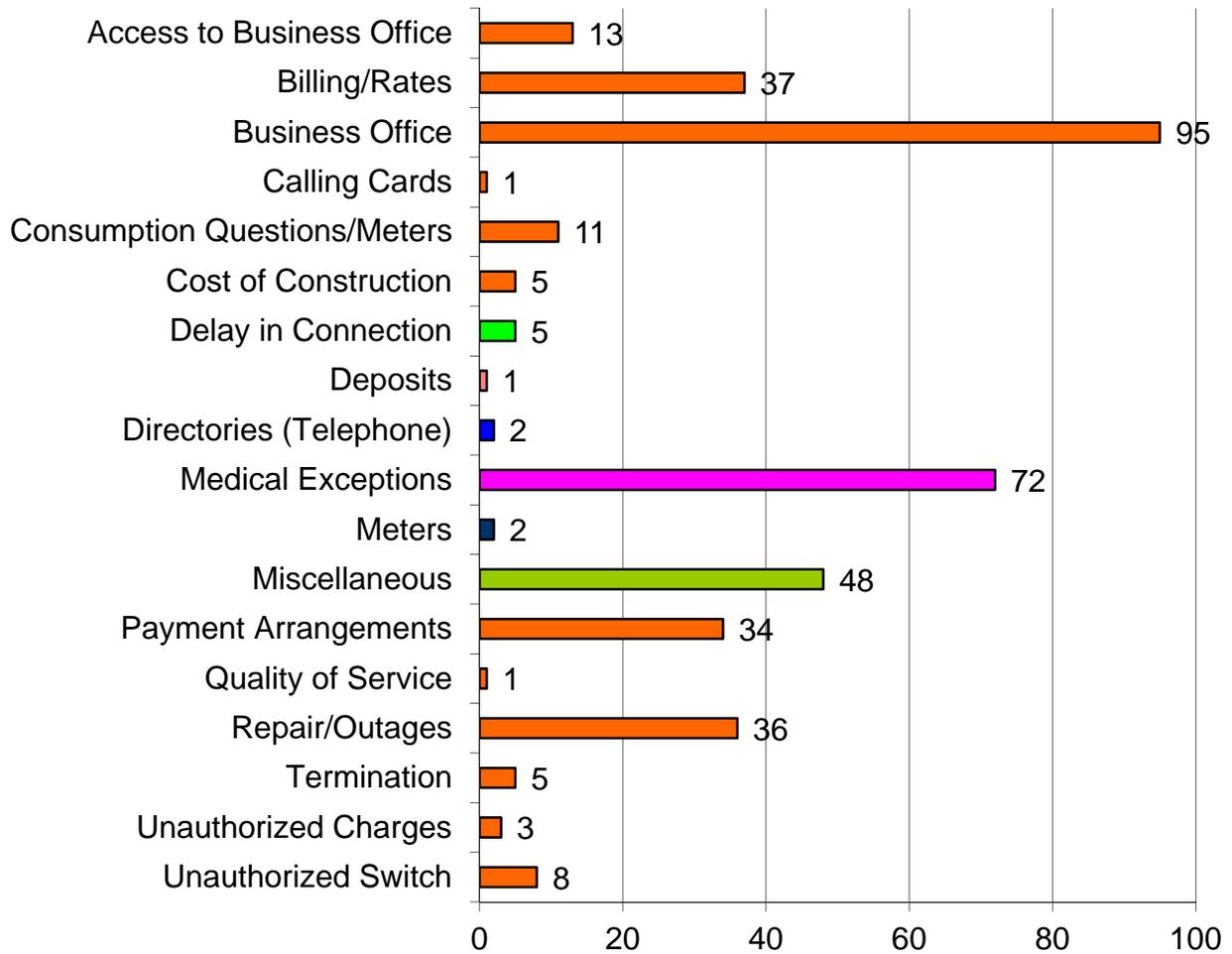
The reports that follow provide a further analysis of the calls and complaints received by the Complaints Bureau in the first half of 2012.

---- Tina Shorten

# January – June 2012 Complaints By Utility Total – 379



**January – June 2012**  
**Complaints By Category**  
**Total 379**



Complaint Analysis By District

<u>By Utility:</u>	Dist. 1	Dist. 2	Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5
AT&T	0	0	1	0	2
Advantaged Telecommunications	0	0	0	1	0
Blackfoot Communications	0	0	0	2	0
Bresnan	4	1	4	1	2
Calling 10	1	0	0	0	0
Central Montana Communications	0	0	1	0	0
CenturyLink	0	0	0	1	18
Consumer Telcom	0	0	0	1	0
Discount Long Distance	0	0	1	1	0
Energy West	1	0	0	0	0
Frontier Communications	0	0	0	2	0
Integra Telecom	0	1	0	0	0
Integrated Services	0	0	2	0	0
Intellicall Operator Services	0	0	1	1	0
Long Distance America	0	0	1	0	0
Miscellaneous	9	7	7	13	12
Montana Opticom	0	0	2	0	0
Montana-Dakota Utilities	4	12	0	0	0
Mountain Water Company	0	0	0	3	0
Multiline Long Distance	0	0	0	1	0
NCIC	0	0	1	0	0
NorthWestern Energy	19	13	41	22	23
NorthWestern Energy-Medical	6	9	24	27	6
Qwest Corporation	13	4	13	18	15
Reliant Communications	0	0	0	0	1
Securus Technologies	0	0	0	1	0
VarTec Telecom	0	0	0	0	1
Wettington Acres Water Service	0	0	0	0	1

Complaint Analysis By District

<u>By Category:</u>	Dist. 1	Dist. 2	Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5
Access to Business Office	2	3	4	1	3
Billing/Rate	5	2	10	6	14
Business Office	13	12	26	22	22
Calling Cards	0	0	0	0	1
Consumption Questions/Meters	2	1	5	1	2
Cost of Construction	1	0	3	0	1
Delay in Connection	1	0	2	1	1
Deposits	0	0	1	0	0
Directories	0	0	0	1	1
Medical Exceptions	6	9	24	27	6
Meters	0	1	1	0	0
Miscellaneous	9	7	7	13	12
Payment Arrangements	3	7	10	7	7
Quality of Service	0	0	0	0	1
Repair/Outages	13	4	3	9	7
Termination	1	1	1	2	0
Unauthorized Charges	1	0	0	1	1
Unauthorized Switch	0	0	2	4	2

Number of Incoming Calls on the Toll-Free Number

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
January	770	571	740
February	793	591	630
March	634	553	649
April	590	583	687
May	620	593	559
June	595	640	459 *
July	556	604	
August	465	625	
September	520	632	
October	539	725	
November	608	568	
December	537	671	
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<b>Total</b>	<b>7,227</b>	<b>7,356</b>	

\* This total includes calls through June 24, 2012.

Number of Complaints

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
January	50	62	57
February	60	71	33
March	46	59	80
April	48	76	57
May	68	81	75
June	61	103	77
July	86	85	
August	56	77	
September	70	83	
October	58	77	
November	46	45	
December	49	51	
	_____	_____	_____
<b>Total</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>870</b>	