

MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION



*Utility Consumer Complaints
2014 Semi-Annual Review*

The Consumer Assistance Program is within the Legal Division of the Montana Public Service Commission. The program consists of one program manager, one consumer representative, and one half-time compliance specialist.

Through June of 2014, the toll-free complaint line had 2588 incoming calls. Consumers were also able to contact our office through the following means and frequencies:

- 23 online complaints through the PSC website;
- 18 direct e-mail complaints to a staff person or Commissioner;
- 35 US Postal Service complaints;
- 5 walk-in complaints; and
- An indeterminate number of complaints received by either the PSC's non-toll-free complaint number or the PSC's main phone number. The PSC has no way to monitor how many of these calls are received.

Of the 2669 documented contacts made to this office through the end of June, 454 resulted in complaints being entered into the tracking database. 255 concerned energy; 133 concerned telecommunications; 64 were miscellaneous; and two were water/sewer.

The Consumer Assistance Program has a number of contingencies for processing a complaint based on the circumstances of the issue. If 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. When an inquiry comes in that doesn't require utility company contact but does require research and response, it is entered into the database as a "miscellaneous" contact for tracking purposes. Inquiries that can be answered without utility contact or research are not entered into the tracking database.

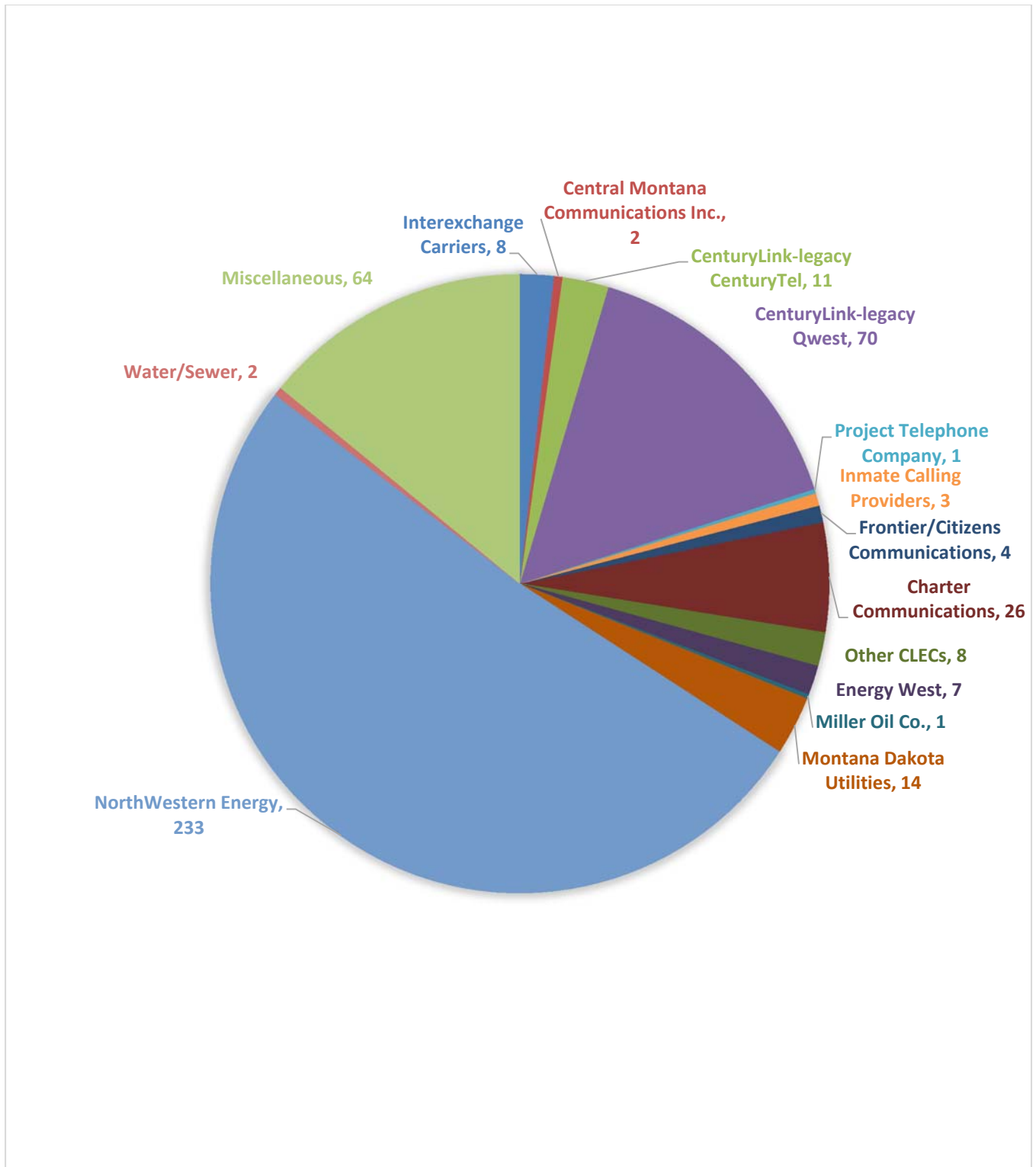
In addition to processing complaints and inquiries received by the PSC, Consumer Assistance Program staff also participate in following tasks:

- Provide input on formal consumer dockets;
- Monitor National Regulatory Research Institute (NRRRI) teleseminars;
- Observe National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) webcasts;
- Participate in State National Action Plan (SNAP) conference calls and meetings;
- Attend National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) conference calls and meetings;
- Contribute to boards and committees impacting utility consumers; and
- Follow changes in utility consumer law at both the state and federal level.

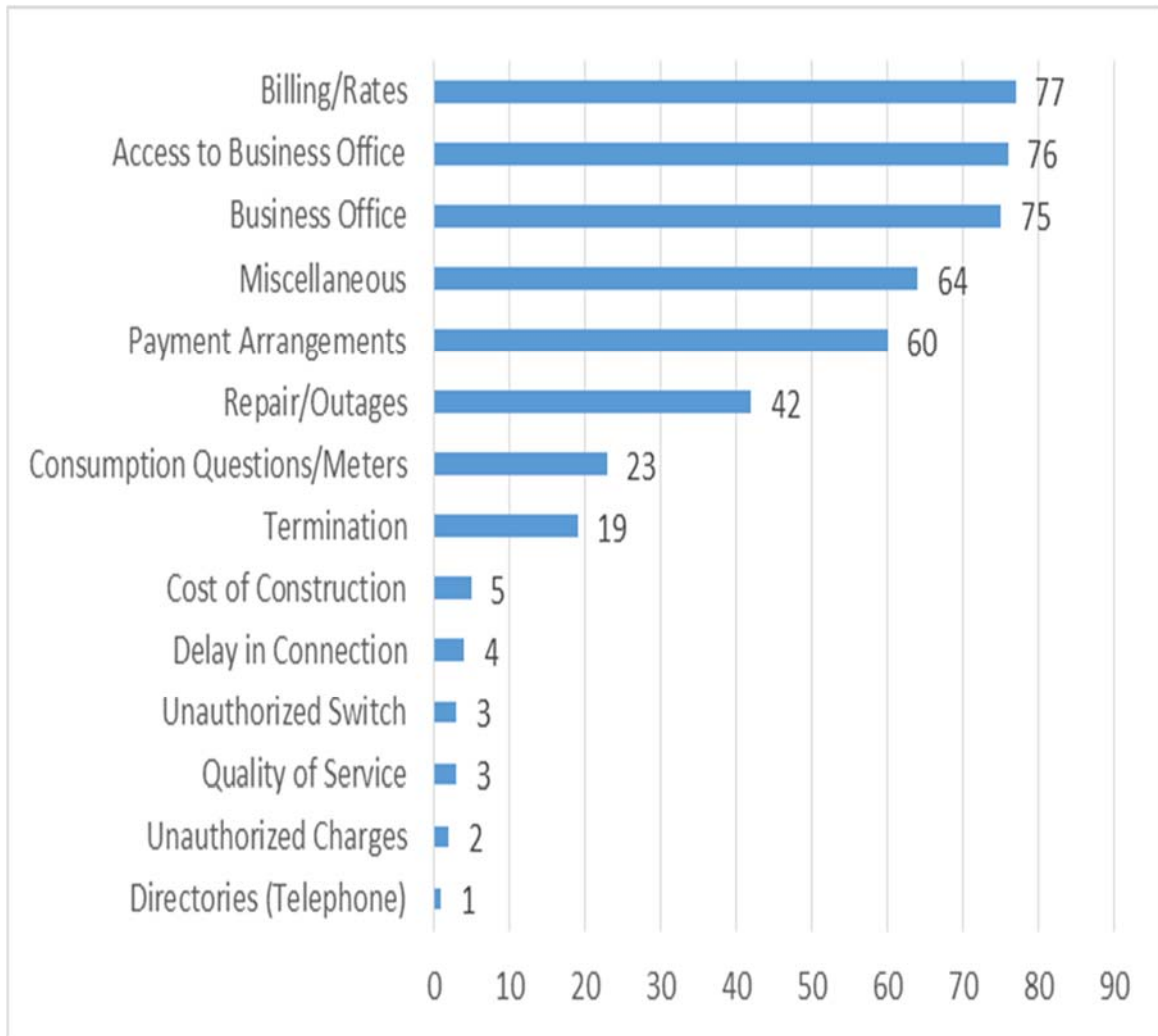
The following reports provide further analysis of calls and complaints received by the Consumer Assistance Program staff through June of 2014.

---Tina Shorten, Manager
Consumer Assistance Program

January – June 2014 Complaints by Utility Total - 454



January – June 2014 Complaints by Category Total - 454



Explanation of top five categories:

Billing/Rates: Incorrect billing, billing questions, collect call charges, calling plans, inmate calls

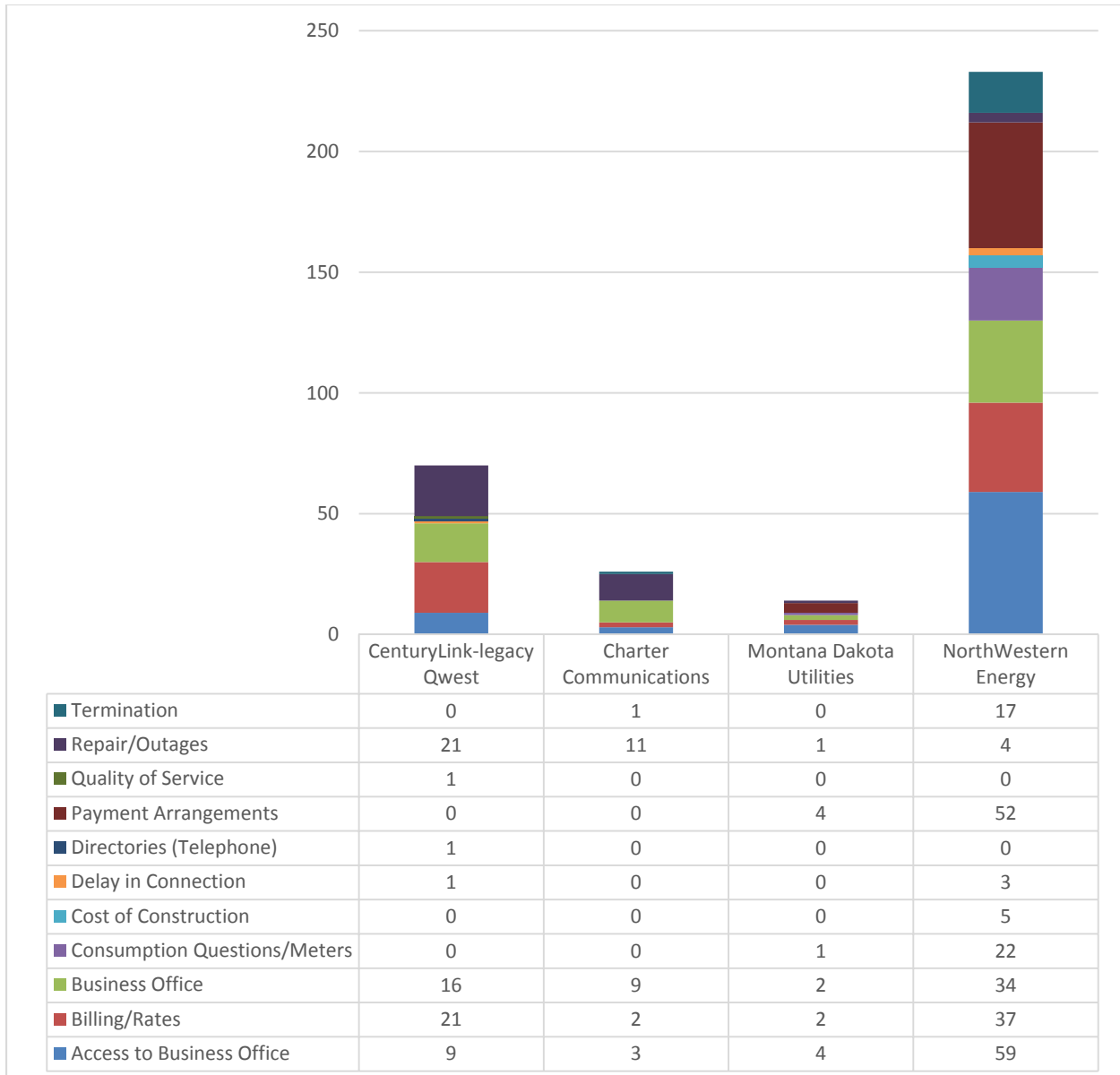
Access to Business Office: Customers not able to get through to the utility company to speak to a representative

Business Office: Company personnel, misinformation, anything that doesn't fit elsewhere

Miscellaneous: Requests for information that require research and response but do not require utility contact; and referrals on non-regulated products or to a non-regulated company

Payment Arrangements: Arrangements to avoid disconnect or to get service reinstated

Breakdown by Category for Companies with Highest Complaint Volume



Complaint percentage when compared to total customers and/or access lines:

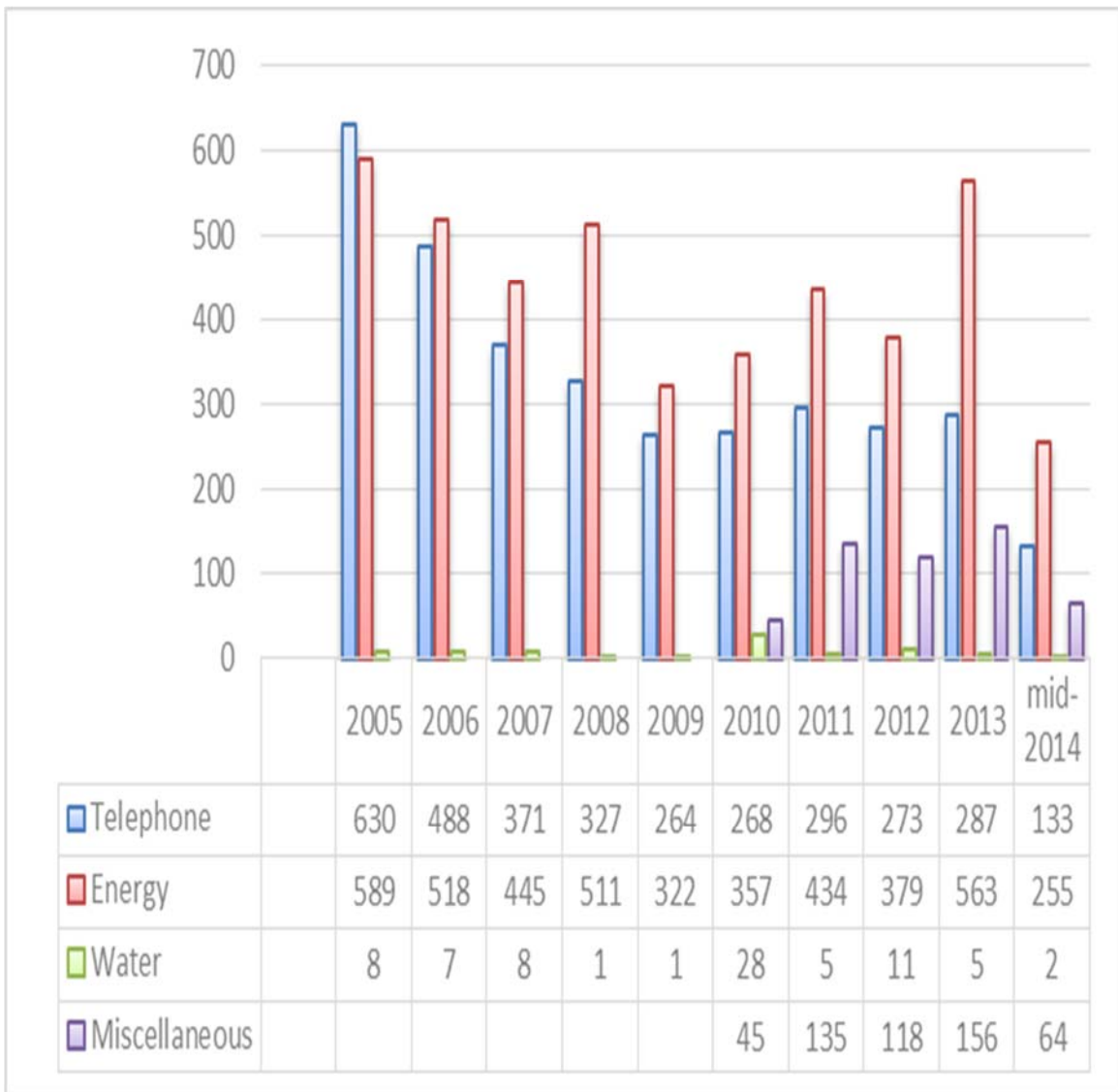
*NorthWestern Energy - .062%

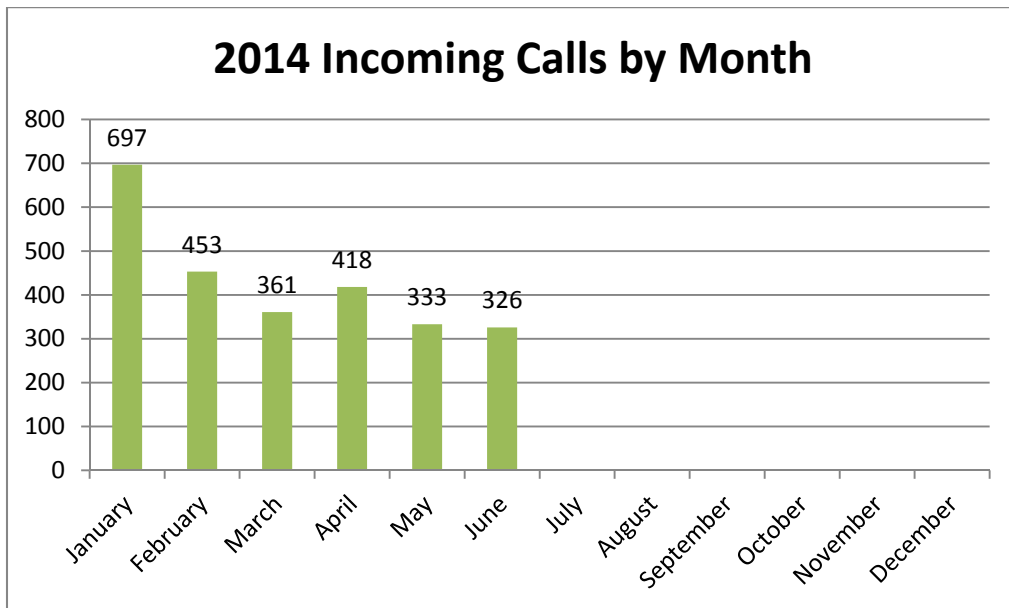
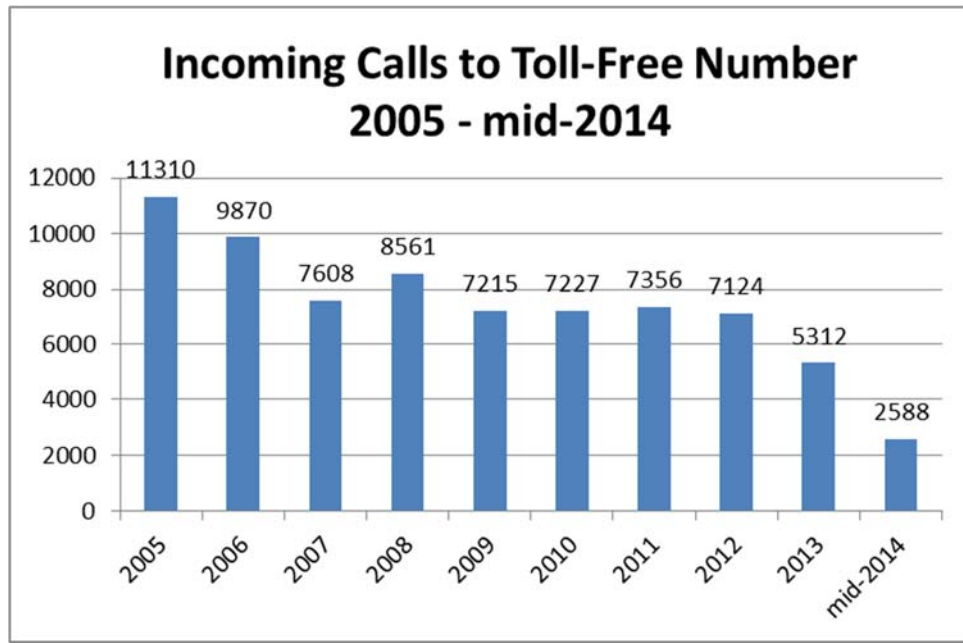
*CenturyLink-legacy Qwest - .047%

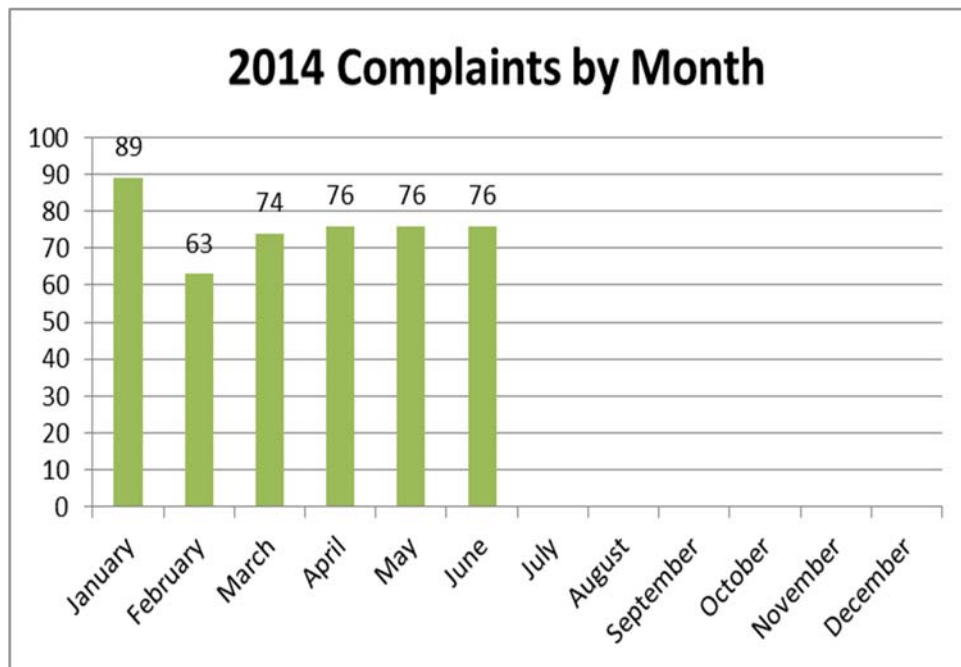
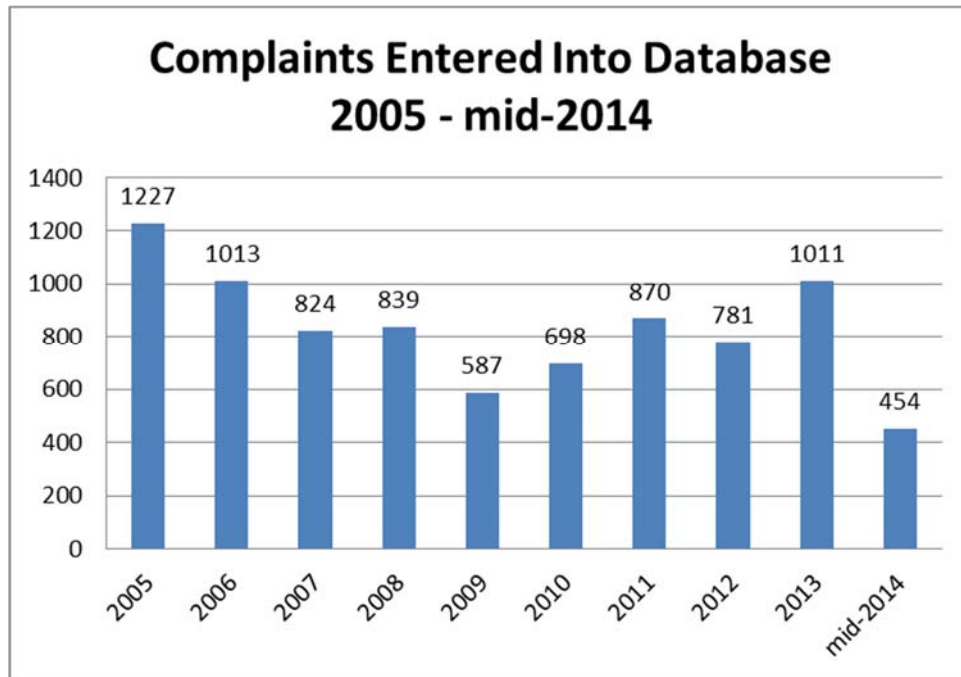
*Montana Dakota Utilities - .015%

*Charter - .032%

Complaints by General Service Type 2005 - Mid-2014









Commissioner District 1 - Travis Kavulla
Commissioner District 2 - Kirk Bushman
Commissioner District 3 - Roger Koopman
Commissioner District 4 - Bob Lake
Commissioner District 5 - Bill Gallagher

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