

MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION



*Consumer Assistance Program
2015 Semi-Annual Review*

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

Through June of 2015, the toll-free consumer assistance line had 2,526 incoming calls. Consumers also contacted the Commission through the following means:

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

Of the 2,704 documented contacts made to the Commission through the end of June, 629 entries were submitted into our tracking database. 253 concerned energy; 208 concerned telecommunications; 165 were miscellaneous; and three 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.

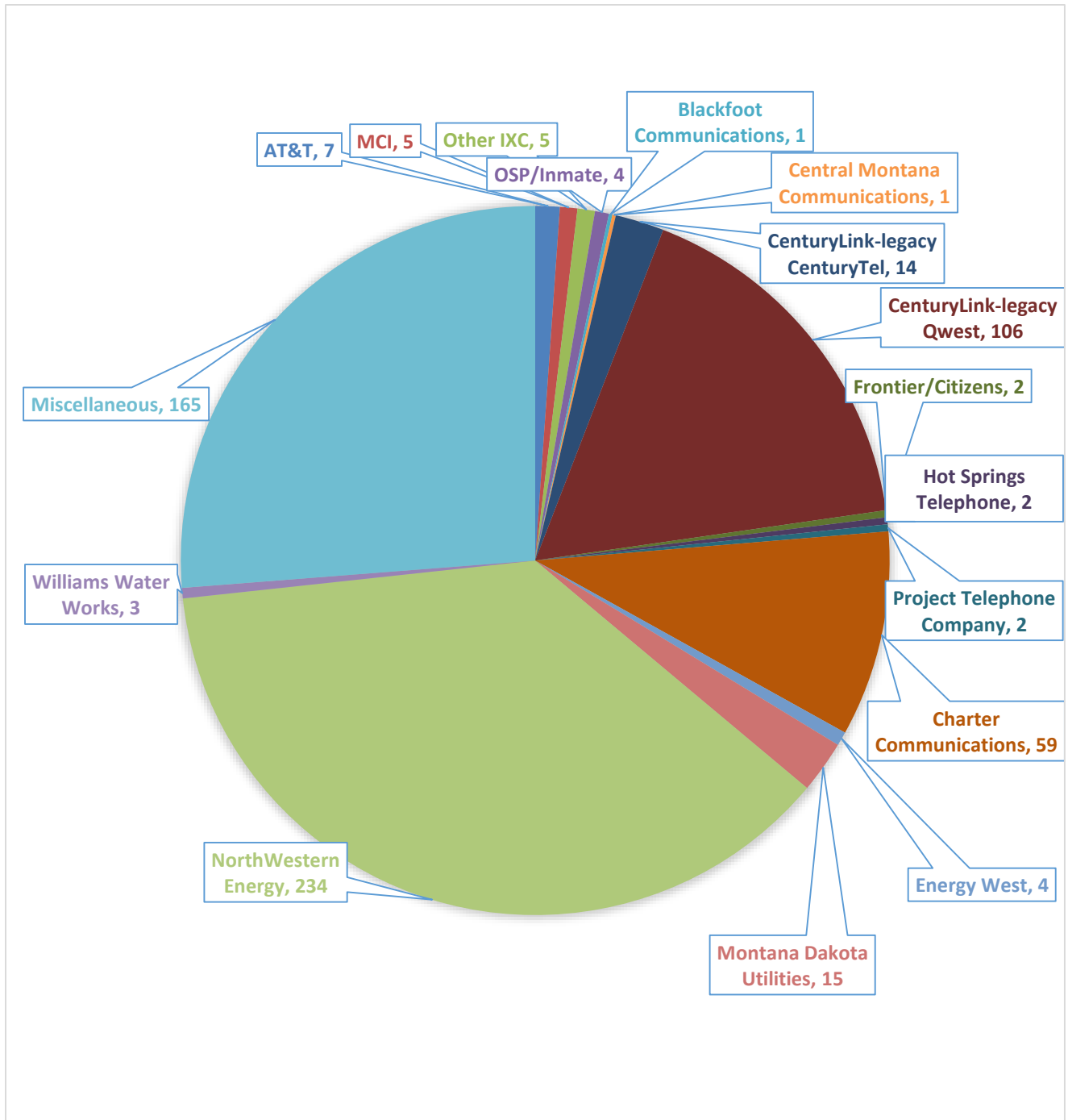
In addition to processing complaints and inquiries received by the Commission, Consumer Assistance Program staff also participate in following tasks:

- Provide input on formal consumer dockets;
- Monitor National Regulatory Research Institute (NRRI) 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.

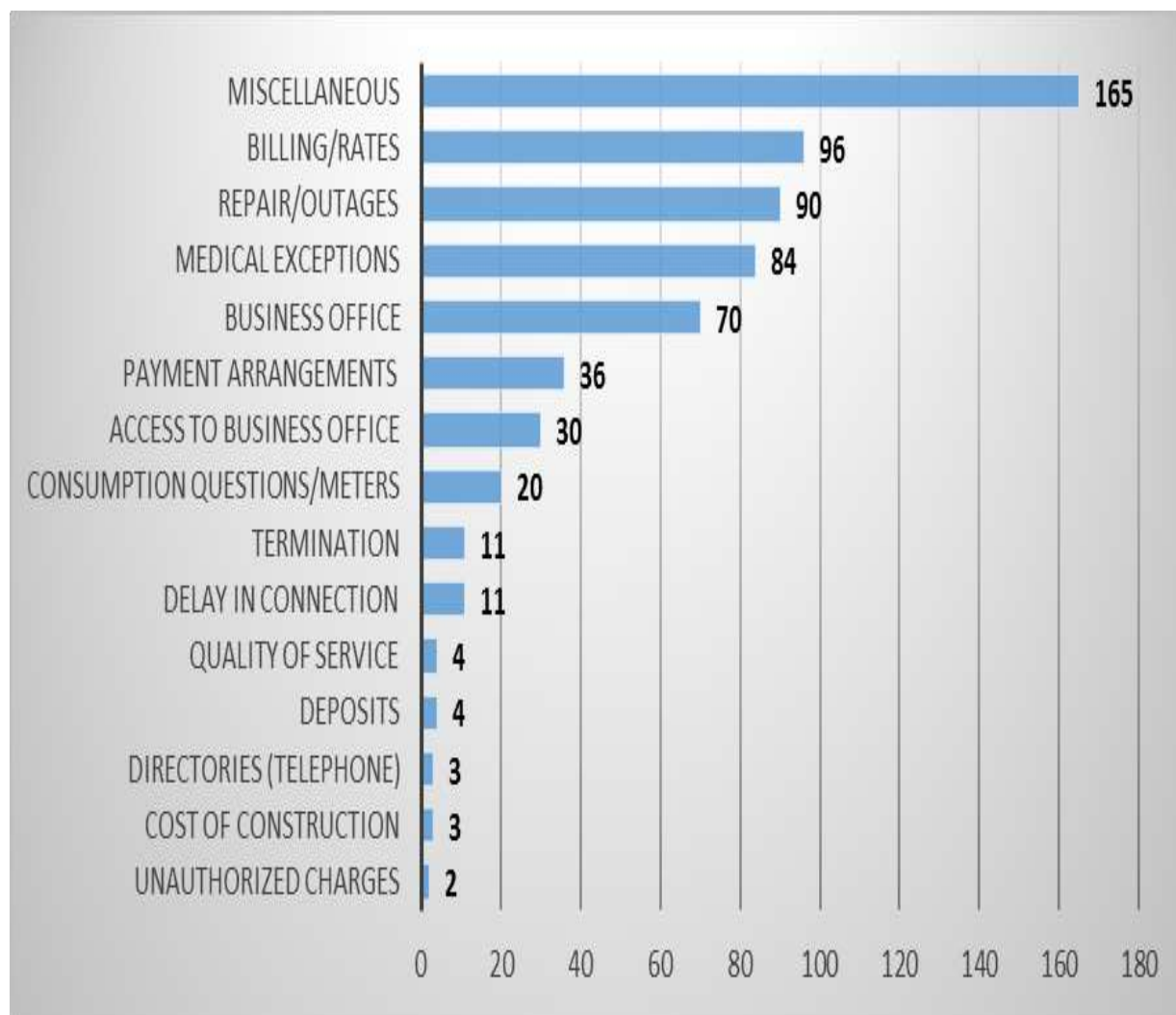
The following reports provide further analysis of calls and complaints received by the Consumer Assistance Program staff through June of 2015.

---Tina Shorten, Manager
Consumer Assistance Program

January – June 2015 Complaints by Utility Total - 629



January – June 2015 Complaints by Category Total - 629



Explanation of top five categories:

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

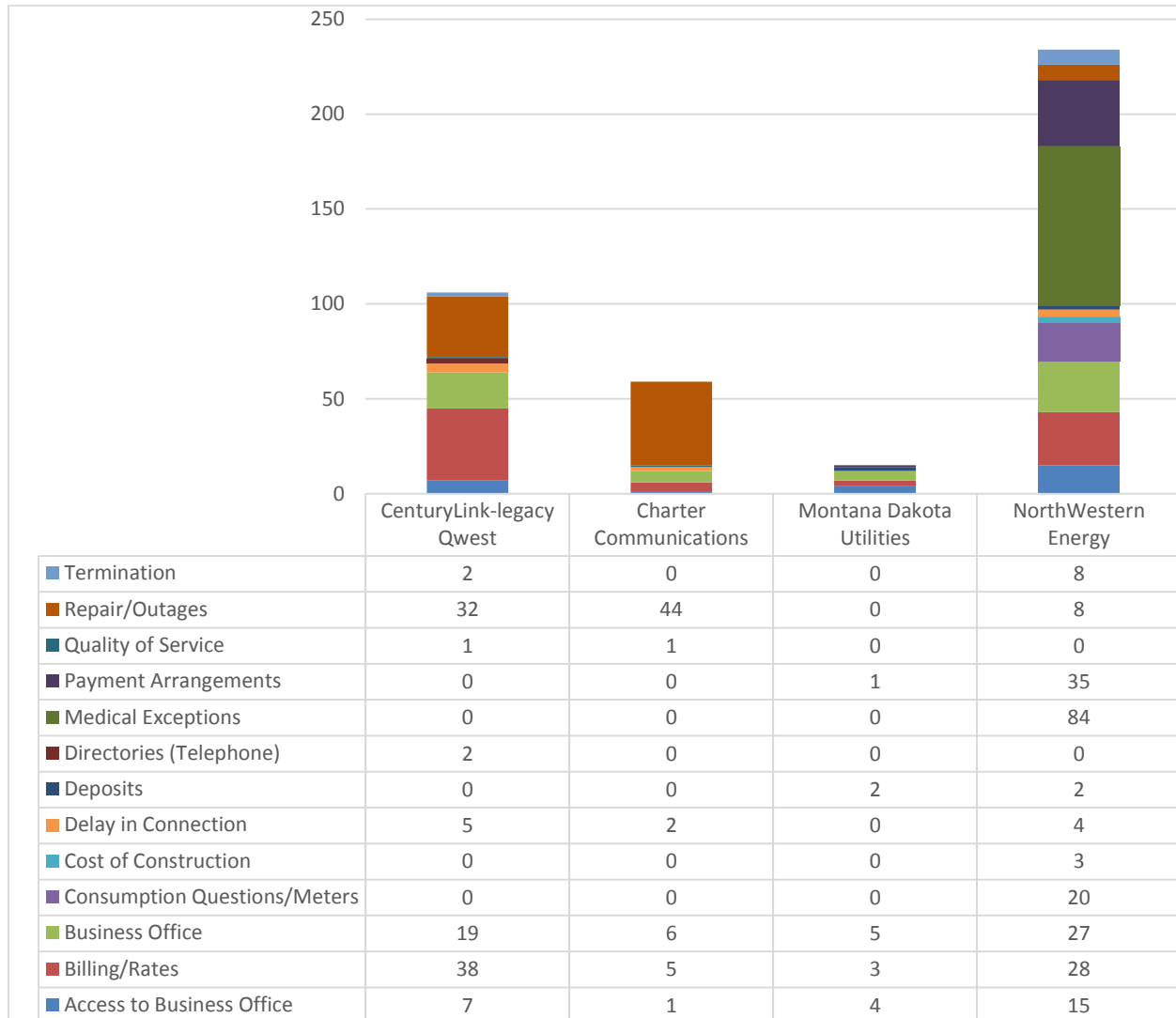
Billing/Rates: Incorrect billing, billing questions, collect call charges, calling plans, inmate calls

Repair/Outages: Outages or repair issues

Medical Exceptions: Notification from a utility company of intent to proceed with disconnect on an account noted with a medical exception

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

Breakdown by Category for Companies with Highest Complaint Volume



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

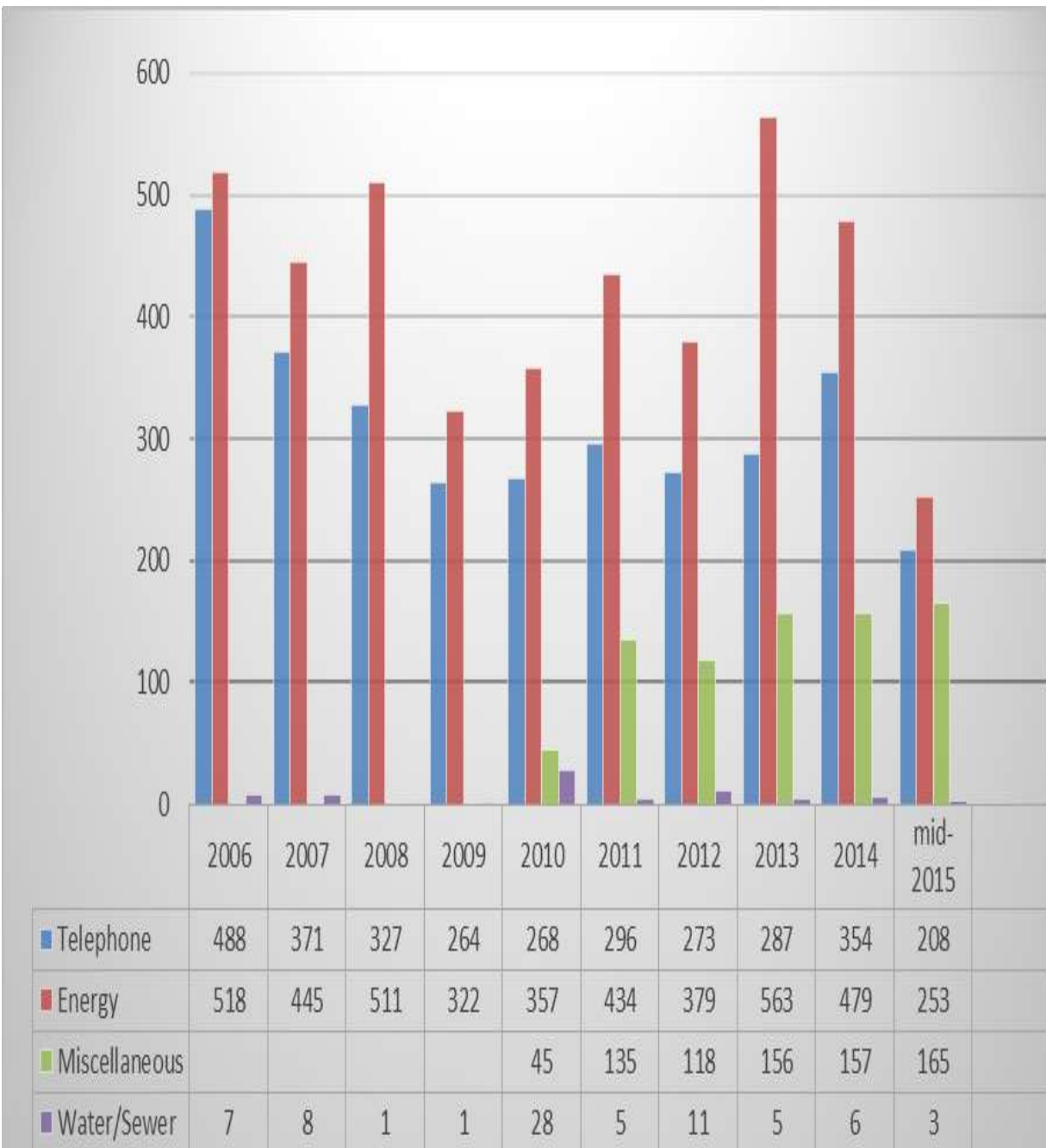
**NorthWestern Energy - .06%*

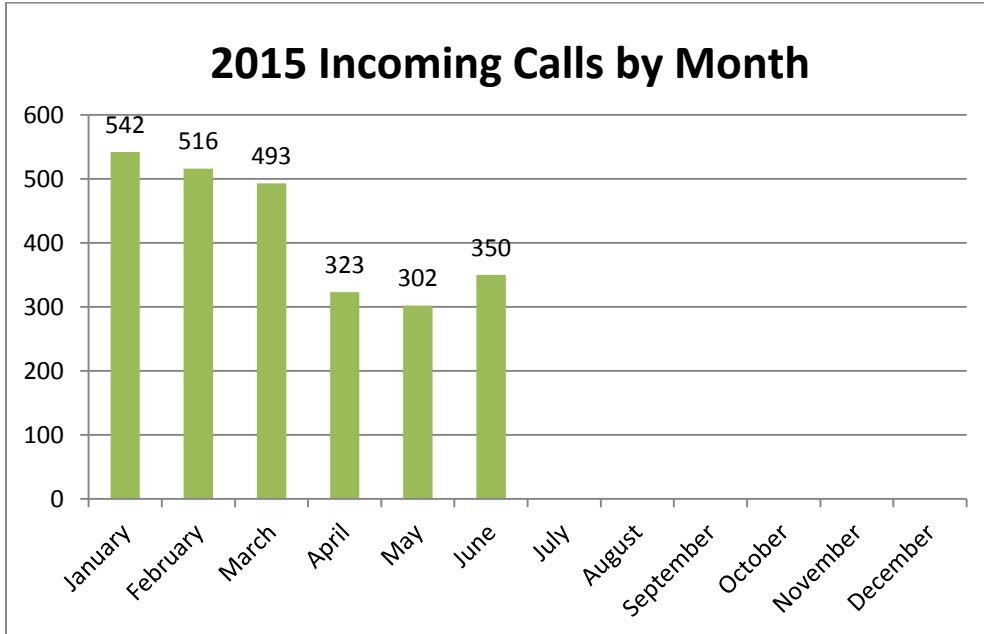
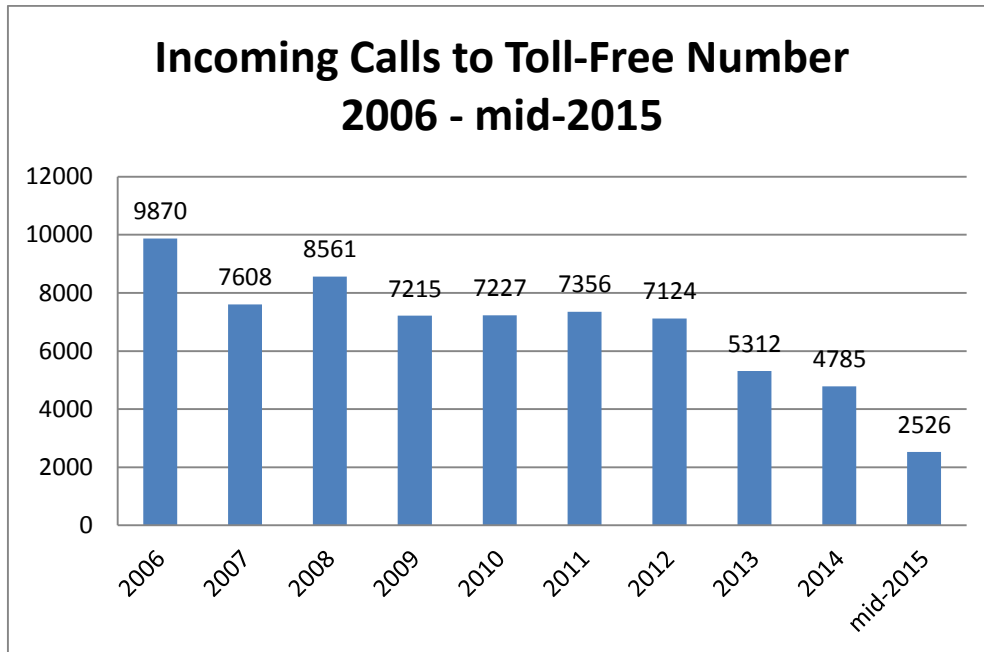
**CenturyLink-legacy Qwest - .078%*

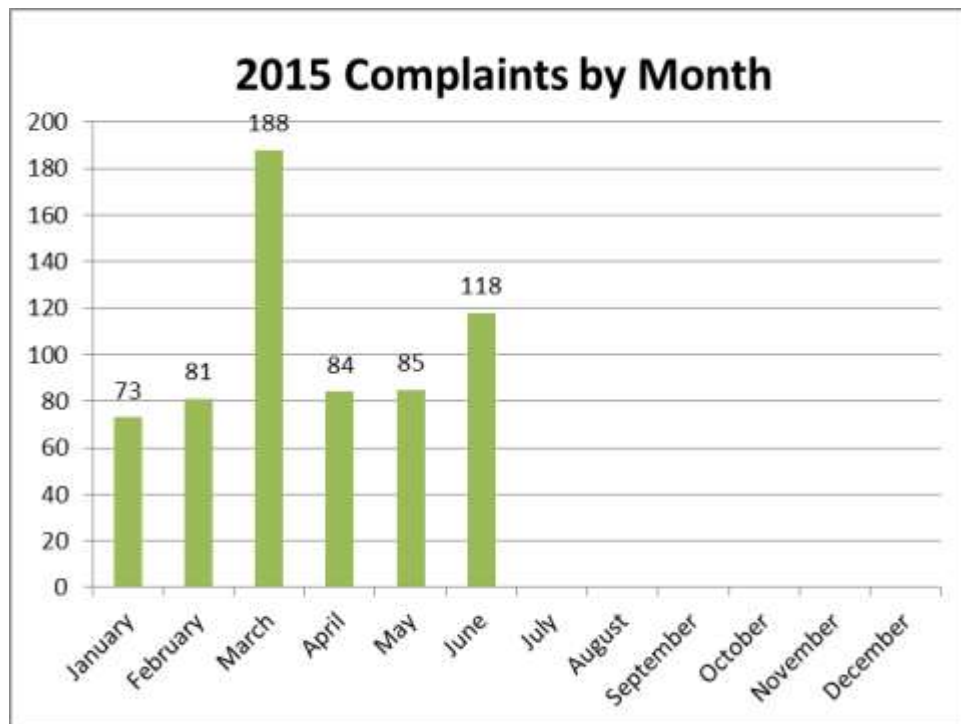
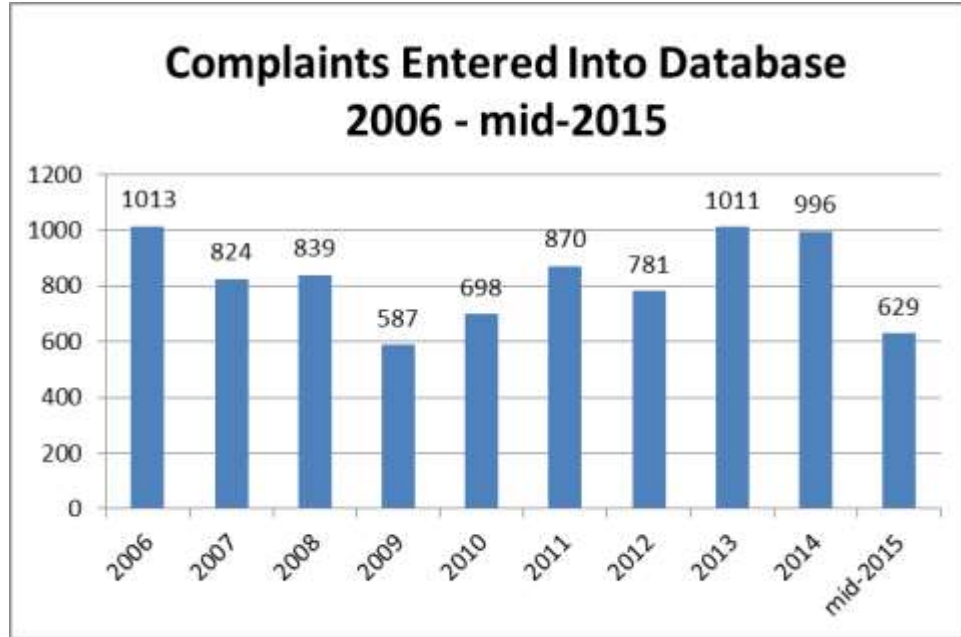
**Montana Dakota Utilities - .016%*

**Charter – Information Not Available*

Complaints by General Service Type 2006 - Mid-2015









Commissioner District 1 - Travis Kavulla
 Commissioner District 2 - Kirk Bushman
 Commissioner District 3 - Roger Koopman
 Commissioner District 4 - Bob Lake
 Commissioner District 5 – Brad Johnson

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