

**NEWS RELEASE****Feb. 16, 2017****For Immediate Release, Contact:**

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**PSC Receives More Than 600 Consumer Contacts in 2016**

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) today reported that the agency received 608 consumer contacts in 2016. These contacts include complaints against regulated entities, public input submitted as part of an open case and referrals to other agencies.

Complaints are received and processed regarding any utility the Commission regulates, including certain aspects of telephone service, natural gas providers, and the three investor-owned electric companies in the state: Xcel, Otter Tail and MDU. Of the 608 contacts, 133 (22%) were complaints against companies regulated by the Commission. Complaint numbers for the three regulated electric companies were all slightly lower compared to 2015 (chart comparing last three years attached to news release). In addition, complaints for the telecommunications company CenturyLink dropped from 89 in 2015 to 60 in 2016. The Commission filed a formal complaint against CenturyLink for quality of service complaints filed in 2015 and recently settled that case with an agreement from CenturyLink to invest in infrastructure improvements in areas of western North Dakota and to improve customer service statewide.

“We have built a lot of opportunities for consumer comment and involvement into our processes, and we really appreciate the effort people make to engage with us on issues of concern,” said Commissioner Julie Fedorchak who holds the Consumer Affairs Portfolio. “Feedback from citizens helps us ask better questions, improve our record and ultimately helps us make better decisions.”

The Commission continues to see an increase in the amount of public input received, with 173 (28.5%) of contacts recorded in 2016 being public input received for cases being considered by the Commission. This compares to 148 in 2015 and only 36 in 2014. Of the 173 public input contacts received, 105 of them were related to the Dakota Access Pipeline. These comments were received after the permit was issued in early January 2016. There were 62 comments received regarding the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2015.

“The combination of our excellent staff and thoughtful input from consumers provides the information we need to make regulatory decisions,” said Commission Chairman Randy Christmann. “It allows us to provide the protection consumers deserve without being unnecessarily burdensome to the providers of these regulated services.”

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The PSC reinstated a Consumer Affairs Portfolio in 2014, which provides additional focus on consumer issues and complaints and on improving communication with the public through traditional public information channels, public meetings and social media. This is the third annual public contact report issued showing data and trends related to complaints and input received by the Commission. The Commission received 905 consumer contacts in 2014. However, 369 were petitions calling for increased crude oil conditioning which didn't fall under PSC jurisdiction. The Commission received 639 total consumer contacts in 2015.

When a complaint is received, a PSC staff member works as a liaison between the consumer and the company to resolve the problem within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Often, the complaint is outside of the Commission's jurisdiction and needs to be referred to another agency or the caller simply needs information. These calls are recorded as "quick referrals." The Commission received 249 quick referrals in 2016.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, grain elevators, auctioneers, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or [www.psc.nd.gov](http://www.psc.nd.gov).

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**Note to the Media: A summary sheet for the 2016 consumer contact report is included on the next page. A copy of the detailed report is available upon request. The detailed report breaks each category down by subject and company.**

**2016 Consumer Contact Report Summary**  
**(Includes complaints, public input and quick referrals)**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
AML	0	2	7
Auction/Clerk	2	0	0
Grain Buyer	0	1	0
Grain Warehouse	0	5	6
Railroad	*408	22	13
PUD-Electric	43	95	127
PUD-Electric/Gas	60	8	2
PUD-Gas	11	51	6
PUD-Pipelines	29	87	^113
PUD-Siting	6	1	4
PUD-Telecom	104	101	70
Reclamation	0	1	0
Weights & Measures	16	12	11
Pipeline Safety	1	0	0
Quick Referrals	225	253	249
<b>Total</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>608</b>

\*369 railroad contacts were due to online petition regarding railroad safety  
(2014)

^105 public input contacts for Dakota Access Pipeline (2016)

<b>Regulated Entities/Complaints file</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
MDU	33	27	17
Xcel/NSP	58	51	46
Otter Tail	18	15	10
CenturyLink/Qwest	72	89	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>133</b>

\*Note: numbers included in above chart reflect only complaints;

Does not reflect public input related to cases