



**NEWS RELEASE**  
**Jan. 31, 2018**

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### **PSC Receives More Than 500 Consumer Contacts in 2017**

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) today reported that the agency received 534 consumer contacts in 2017. These contacts include informal complaints against regulated entities, public input submitted as part of an open case, referrals to other agencies and/or requests for information.

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 534 contacts, 144 (27%) were complaints against companies regulated by the Commission. Complaint numbers for the three regulated electric companies were all consistent with previous years, with MDU and Xcel showing a slight decrease in complaints and Otter Tail a very small increase (chart comparing last three years attached to news release). Complaints for the telecommunications company CenturyLink increased from 60 in 2016 to 88 in 2017 (46.7% increase). The majority of those complaints were due to prolonged outages or customers who experience frequent outages.

“Public input continues to play a vital role in the regulatory process, helping us better understand areas of concern and invariably serving as a valuable source of guidance,” said Commissioner Brian Kroshus, who holds the Consumer Affairs Portfolio. “Hearing from those we serve is greatly valued and appreciated. Our role in serving the public is most effective through open communication with the citizens of North Dakota.”

In addition to recording complaints and concerns, the Commission also receives public input for cases being considered by the Commission. Public input is most often received for siting cases where the Commission is looking at permitting new transmission projects like pipelines, electric transmission lines and wind farms or for rate cases. The comments can be either in support or opposition of the project. In 2017 there were 92 public input contacts recorded or 17 percent of the total contacts. This number is down significantly from 2016 where 173 public input contacts were recorded, including 105 of them related to the Dakota Access Pipeline.

“We never want people to have a sense of helplessness when dealing with monopoly utilities,” said Commission Chairman Randy Christmann. “Even though many of the consumer contacts involve issues outside of our legal jurisdiction, our team always strives to provide the service people deserve from their Public Service Commission.”

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 fourth 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 and 608 in 2016 (chart comparing last four years is attached to this news release).

“We rely on input from the public to make the best possible decisions and to ensure regulated utilities are serving the public fairly and providing quality service,” Commissioner Julie Fedorchak said. “The trends this past year are consistent with the level of activity for siting and rate cases, and provide direction for areas where additional follow-up is required.”

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 255 quick referrals in 2017.

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 2017 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.**

**2017 Consumer Contact Report Summary**  
(Includes informal complaints, public input and quick referrals)

	2014	2015	2016	2017
AML	0	2	7	3
Auction/Clerk	2	0	0	3
Grain Buyer	0	1	0	1
Grain Warehouse	0	5	6	2
Railroad	*408	22	13	10
PUD-Electric	43	95	127	87
PUD-Electric/Gas	60	8	2	3
PUD-Gas	11	51	6	24
PUD-Pipelines	29	87	^113	35
PUD-Siting	6	1	4	7
PUD-Telecom	104	101	70	93
Reclamation	0	1	0	0
Weights & Measures	16	12	11	11
Pipeline Safety	1	0	0	0
Quick Referrals	225	253	249	255
<b>Total</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>534</b>

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

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

**Informal Complaints**

<u>Regulated Entities/Complaints filed</u>	2014	2015	2016	2017
MDU	33	27	17	12
Xcel/NSP	58	51	46	31
Ottertail	18	15	10	13
CenturyLink/Qwest	72	89	60	88
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>144</b>

\*Note: numbers included in above chart reflect only informal complaints; Does not reflect public input related to cases