

*Wyoming
Public Service
Commission*

2018

*Annual
Telecommunications
Legislative Report*

COMMISSIONERS

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Foreword

This 2018 Annual Telecommunications Legislative Report provides an update on the state of the telecommunications industry in Wyoming through the end of calendar year 2017. It addresses:

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Commission Telecommunications Regulatory Activity in 2017

The Commission processed 121 telecommunications records in 2017, compared to 134 in 2016. This activity included tariff and price list filings, interconnection agreements, and authority/certificates of public convenience and necessity, federal universal service eligible telecommunications carrier designations and certifications, and intrastate rate rebalancing. The Commission also spent a considerable amount of time working on the Wyoming Universal Service Fund, as well as attending to other matters including Joint Corporations Committee, federal reform of universal service (Connect America Fund), sale and transfer of companies, service quality investigations, petitions for competitive designation, access, investigations, deregulation, wireless, cable and VoIP issues, and responding to industry inquiries, surveys, consumer inquiries, and consumer complaints.

The Commission certifies all carriers eligible to receive federal high cost universal service support for rural and non-rural carriers as “eligible telecommunications carriers” (ETCs). Federal rules require the Commission to file annual certifications on or before October 1 each year with the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) and Universal Service Administrative Company (“USAC”). Timely certification ensures that federal high cost universal service support payments to Wyoming ETCs continue. In its annual certifications, the Commission must identify Wyoming ETCs eligible to receive federal support in the upcoming year. The Commission must also certify that each ETC will use the high cost support only for the provisioning, maintenance and upgrading of facilities and services for which support is intended. Commission Rule Chapter 4, Section 14 outlines in detail the annual certification information requirements for all ETCs. The Commission certified 17 ETCs on September 27, 2017.

Commissioners and Staff also participated in local and national telecommunications association meetings in 2017 for telecommunications entities such as the Wyoming Telephone Association, the Tri-State Telephone Association, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and others to maintain awareness of current issues, developments and trends.

Wyoming Universal Service Fund (WUSF)

The WUSF was established by W.S. §§ 37-15-501 and 502. It is administered in Chapter 5 of the Commission’s Rules. The WUSF was established to ensure affordable prices for local exchange services to “assist only those customers of telecommunications companies located in areas of this state with relatively high rates for noncompetitive essential local exchange services.” Telecommunications companies receive payments from the WUSF after considering any contributions of Federal Universal Service support, to ensure high-cost customers pay no more than the imputed price benchmark of \$30.00.

The WUSF is funded by an assessment on all gross Wyoming intrastate retail service revenues of wireline, cellular and long distance service providers. The assessment revenue, which was set at 1.40% of intrastate telecommunications bills for the 12-month period beginning July 1, 2017, funds support of high-cost basic line charges to maintain

affordable rates. The WUSF imputed price benchmark of \$30.00 per month for basic telecommunications local exchange service is in effect until July 1, 2019 unless otherwise adjusted by the Commission.

Based on the company reports and calculations of the statewide average and benchmark, 22,386 access lines are eligible to receive monthly support from the WUSF beginning July 1, 2017. This figure compares to the 23,879 access lines that were eligible to receive monthly support from the WUSF beginning July 1, 2016.

Wyoming local exchange companies received \$18,790,672¹ in Federal Universal Service Fund (FUSF) support in 2016, which supported 47,351 lines and WUSF distributed \$2,287,246.56 supporting 23,035 lines for FY16-17. Total applicable universal support distributed to Wyoming local exchange companies for FY16-17 was \$21,077,918.56. FUSF support in 2017 was \$16,996,519.96² in 2017, (line count for 2017 is unavailable at this time) and WUSF will distribute \$2,302,202.51, supporting 22,185 lines for FY17-18. Total applicable universal support distributed to Wyoming local exchange companies for FY17-18 is \$19,298,722.47.

FUSF and WUSF support helps Wyoming customers maintain telecommunication voice service for \$30 or less per month, as well as allows the companies to maintain and upgrade facilities for the benefit of their Wyoming customers. **Figure 1** below shows the approximate annual WUSF support received by each Wyoming County during FY17 and FY18.³ A county may not receive disbursements from the WUSF for two reasons 1.) customer rates are already below the \$30 imputed price benchmark and/or 2.) the amount of FUSF disbursements received by the local exchange company is sufficient to bring customer rates below the \$30 imputed price benchmark. In either case, the local exchange company would not be eligible to receive WUSF support.

¹ This figure is not inclusive of all mechanisms and disbursements of Federal Universal Service Fund Support received by Wyoming telecommunications companies, but reflects solely those “Contributions from the Federal Universal Service Fund” defined in Commission Rule Chapter 5, Section 1(c)(ii) as “funds received from the FUSF as reported to the Commission for high cost support mechanisms that will assist customers located in areas with relatively high rates for noncompetitive essential local exchange service.

² Id.

³ Commission Staff does not have enough information to calculate the exact disbursement amount by Wyoming County. However, the above calculations are as accurate as possible, with the information Commission Staff has to work with. Carriers provide line counts and price rates by exchange on the WUSF Annual Reports. Commission Staff used this data to align the exchanges up with the counties they are located in. However, some exchanges span more than one County and without collecting the line count data down to the County level, Commission Staff allocated the line counts to the County that the actual central office is located in.

Figure 1. Annual WUSF Disbursement by County

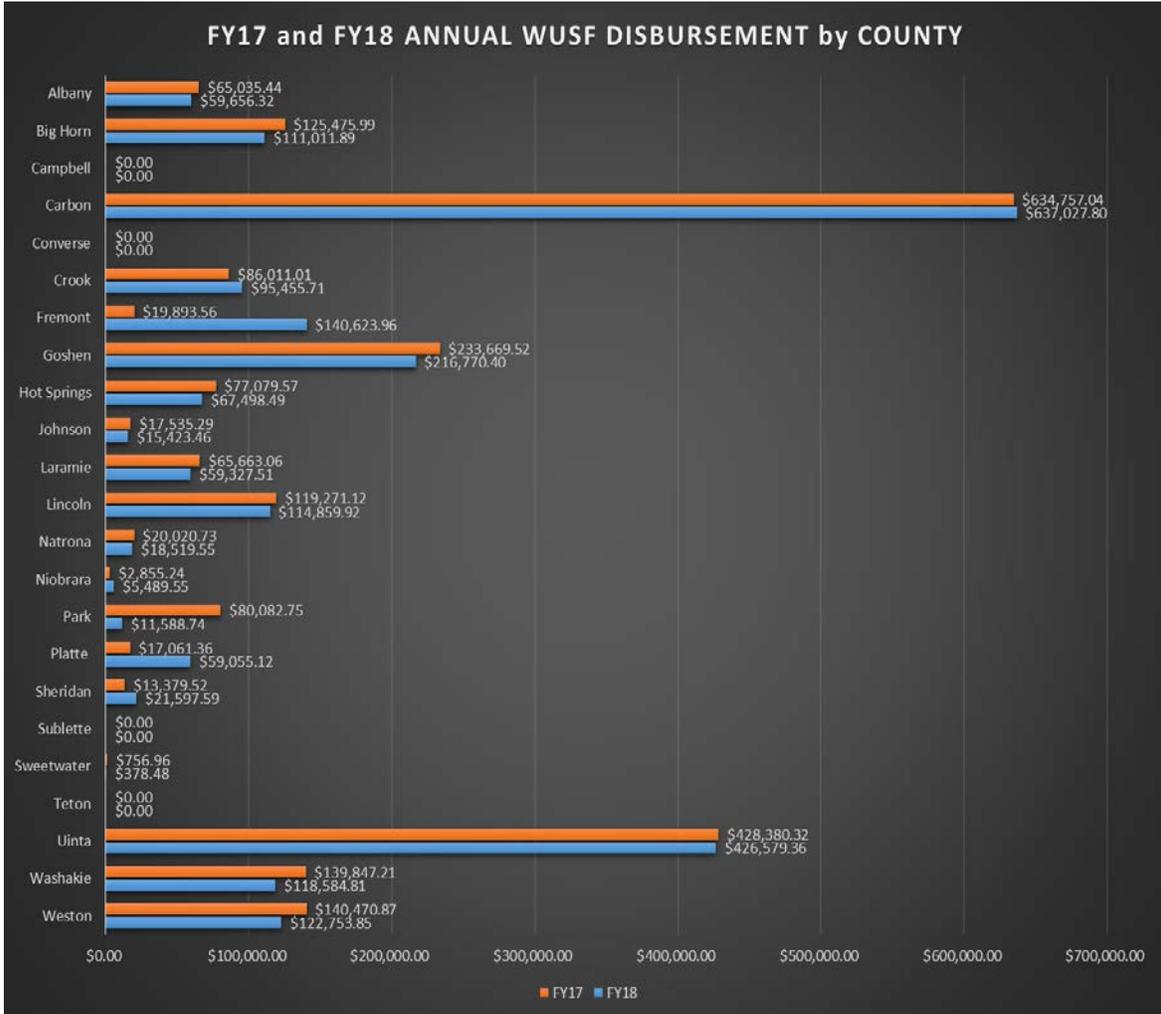


Figure 2 below shows the assessment level has varied from 0% to 6% as funding requirements changed due to [i] fluctuations in local telecommunications service prices, [ii] the level of federal support provided to Wyoming’s local exchange carriers, and [iii] the balance in the WUSF.

Figure 2. WUSF Assessments

Assessment	Docket Number	Effective Date
1.00%	90072-XO-97-1	07/01/97
2.00%	90072-XO-98-2	04/01/98
2.00%	90072-XO-98-3	07/01/98
6.00%	90072-XO-98-4	10/01/98
3.00%	90072-XO-99-6	03/01/99
2.00%	90072-XO-99-10	07/01/99
3.00%	90072-XO-99-11	10/01/99
2.00%	90072-XO-00-13	07/01/00
4.00%	90072-XO-01-17	07/01/01
4.00%	90072-XO-02-20	07/01/02
1.00%	90072-XO-03-22	07/01/03
0.00%	90072-XO-04-24	07/01/04
0.00%	90072-XO-05-25	07/01/05
0.85%	90072-26-XO-06	07/01/06
1.05%	90072-27-XO-07	07/01/07
1.00%	90072-XO-28-08	07/01/08
1.00%	90072-XO-29-09	07/01/09
1.20%	90072-32-XO-10	07/01/10
1.20%	90072-35-XO-11	07/01/11
1.00%	90072-37-XO-12	07/01/12
0.80%	90072-38-XO-13	05/13/13
1.00%	90072-39-XO-14	07/25/14
1.20%	90072-39-XO-15	07/01/15
1.30%	90072-41-XO-16	07/01/16
1.40%	90072-42-XO-17	07/01/17

The WUSF Manager provided reports and documentation to the Commission, illustrating the fund activity for FY16-17 and computation of a recommended assessment level for the FY17-18 as set forth in **Figure 3** below.

Figure 3. Schedule of WUSF Receipts and Disbursements, 2009 - 2017

WUSF	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Fiscal Year Beginning Balance	\$577,729	\$637,872	\$390,021	\$1,402,742	\$1,168,177	\$788,215	\$1,086,264	\$810,081	\$525,047
Fund Receipts									
Assessments	\$2,456,867	\$2,639,386	\$2,343,257	\$2,221,608	\$2,814,546	\$3,091,377	\$3,152,887	\$3,084,438	\$3,040,688
Qwest Performance Assurance Plan Payments							\$667	\$7,067	\$4,667
Investment Income	\$9,428	\$9,023	\$10,447	\$15,326	\$68,390	\$35,923	\$27,581	\$58,343	\$22,125
Total Fund Receipts	\$2,466,295	\$2,648,409	\$2,353,705	\$2,236,934	\$2,882,936	\$3,127,300	\$3,181,135	\$3,149,848	\$3,067,480
Fund Disbursements									
Support Payments	\$2,287,247	\$2,505,019	\$1,974,250	\$3,117,293	\$2,544,812	\$2,619,795	\$3,251,929	\$2,793,767	\$2,676,481
Administrative Expense	\$81,677	\$83,132	\$106,105	\$79,061	\$78,174	\$67,405	\$68,506	\$59,900	\$105,965
Office/Misc. Expenses	\$12,349	\$120,400	\$25,499	\$53,302	\$25,385	\$60,138	\$158,749	\$19,998	
Total Fund Disbursements	\$2,381,273	\$2,708,552	\$2,105,853	\$3,249,656	\$2,648,371	\$2,747,338	\$3,479,184	\$2,873,665	\$2,782,446
Fiscal Year Ending Balance	\$662,751	\$577,729	\$637,872	\$390,020	\$1,402,742	\$1,168,177	\$788,215	\$1,086,264	\$810,081

Federal Universal Service Fund (FUSF)

On November 18, 2011, the FCC issued its Report and Order directing comprehensive reforms of its universal service fund and intercarrier compensation systems (National Broadband Plan) to accelerate broadband access, and transforming the existing

universal service fund into the Connect America Fund (CAF), shifting the focus of the program to proliferation of broadband service. The FCC is implementing these changes in a bifurcated approach, with a cost-based model and targeted support for price cap carriers, which is CenturyLink in Wyoming. The second part of the reforms address rate-of-return carriers with an alternate cost model. On April 29, 2015, the FCC announced model based support offers for price cap carriers, offering \$8,354,250 per year in support of CenturyLink to provide service in Wyoming. This compares to \$12,900,960 that CenturyLink received in frozen high-cost support (FCHS) for Wyoming in 2017, representing roughly a 35% reduction in support. On August 27, 2015, CenturyLink announced it had declined the offer from the FCC, which means CenturyLink will continue to receive \$12,900,960 in FCHS, until the FCC runs a competitive auction.

The FCC will hold a competitive, reverse auction beginning July 24, 2018, that will distribute high-cost support that was rejected by companies like CenturyLink and CenturyLink will be eligible to bid for that support. To the extent that the auction is successful in attracting winning bidders to serve CenturyLink's high-cost areas, the legacy support CenturyLink was receiving may be redistributed. CenturyLink remains obligated to maintain existing service unless and until it receives authority from the FCC to discontinue that service.

Carriers that receive funding must meet defined build-out obligations in communities that most need investment. The goal: to make broadband available to all.

The Rate-of-Return Order allowed carriers to elect the new Alternative Connect America Model (A-CAM), providing a set amount of monthly support over 10 years, or remain with a reformed version of legacy support mechanisms with Connect America Fund Broadband Loop Support (CAF-BLS) and High Cost Loop Support (HCLS).

Chugwater Telephone Company and Union Telephone Company are the only two rural incumbent providers that have elected to receive federal high-cost support via the A-CAM. No action was required by carriers electing to continue to receive support from the reformed legacy mechanisms, including CAF-BLS and HCLS, if applicable.

Tri-Annual Audit of the Wyoming Universal Service Fund

As required by Commission Rule, Chapter 5, Section 2(b), the WUSF was audited by an outside independent Certified Public Accountant, Samson T.A. and Associates, PLLC, in Washington D.C. This was a financial and compliance audit and was conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards as set forth by the American Institute of Certified Public Accounts. Fiscal Years ending 2015 and 2016 were audited for review of financial records for accuracy and consistency. The WUSF audit produced a favorable outcome with no findings, and stated: "The Public Service Commission of Wyoming is performing the management responsibilities in accordance with Wyoming Statutes, Wyoming Public Service Commission Rules, Orders, and Administrative Guidelines in calculating the weighted statewide average and \$30 imputed price benchmark for fiscal years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016:

- The WUSF financial records are accurate and consistent, and accounting controls are adequate;
- The methodology, data and inputs used and the formula for calculating WUSF annual assessment rate are accurate, appropriate, and applied uniformly for telecommunications companies; and
- The methodology used by companies for gross intrastate retrieval revenue are assessed consistently and remittances of WUSF assessment payments and other taxing authorities are appropriate.”

A public copy of the WUSF Audit Report can be found on the Commissions website: <http://psc.state.wy.us/pscdocs/wusf-mgr-rpt.html>.

Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs)

On September 27, 2017, the Commission filed its annual certifications of rural, non-rural, and competitive ETCs with the FCC and USAC. The Commission’s review of each carrier’s application for certification ensures that federal universal service support for ETCs is used for the purposes intended.

Figure 4. Certified ETCs.

- 1) Advanced Communications Technology, Inc.
- 2) All West Communications, Inc.
- 3) CenturyTel of Wyoming, Inc., d/b/a CenturyLink
- 4) Chugwater Telephone Company, Inc.
- 5) Dubois Telephone Exchange, Inc.
- 6) Gold Star Communications LLC d/b/a Silver Star Communications
- 7) Boomerang Wireless LLC., d/b/a enTouch Wireless
- 8) Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC
- 9) Range Telephone Cooperative, Inc., (includes RT Communications, Inc.)
- 10) Silver Star Telephone Communications, Inc., d/b/a Silver Star Communications (ILEC)
- 11) Silver Star Telephone Communications, Inc., d/b/a/ Silver Star Communications (CLEC)
- 12) Tempo Telecom LLC d/b/a Tempo
- 13) Tri County Telephone Association, Inc. (includes TCT West, Inc.)
- 14) Uintah Basin Electronics Telecommunications, Inc. d/b/a Strata Networks
- 15) Union Telephone Company, Inc.
- 16) Union Telephone Company, Inc., d/b/a Union Cellular
- 17) United Telephone Company of the West, Inc., d/b/a CenturyLink of the West

Annual certification is a federal requirement for the continued receipt of FUSF support by Wyoming’s designated ETCs. The ETC certification requirements are set forth in Commission Rules Chapter 5, Section 14.

There are several types of high-cost support, depending on whether the carrier is classified as a price cap carrier (CenturyTel f/k/a Qwest) or a rural telephone company, usually called rate-of-return carriers (less than 10,000 lines).⁴ An important type of high-cost support for rural carriers is high cost loop support (HCLS). FCC rules set forth a local rate floor for rate of return carriers receiving HCLS.

Rate-of-return carriers must show the FCC that their local rates are above the rate floor to be eligible to receive HCLS. The Commission has been receiving filings since 2014 from some of the carriers as they implement rates above the rate floor, effective June 1 of each year. The FCC sets the rate floor based upon a national survey of urban rates. The rate floor is being phased in as follows:

- Jan. 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016 –\$16
- July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017 –\$18
- July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018 –\$20
- July 1, 2018 – currently \$21.22, recalculated annually

The rationale is that no company should receive support for high-cost service if it has set its rate at a very low level. High-cost subscribers' rates should reflect that the subscribers are paying their fair share of the costs, and that they are not receiving artificially low rates due to subsidies from others. Likewise, if rates are too high, that would indicate that the company really does not need additional support because the customers are paying such high prices that they may actually be paying the full marginal cost of service.

Lifeline provides discounts on monthly telephone service (wireline or wireless) for eligible low-income subscribers. These discounts are currently set at \$9.25 per month. Lifeline recipients may not receive more than one Lifeline service per household. That is, eligible low-income subscribers may receive a Lifeline discount on either a wireline or a wireless service, but may not receive a Lifeline discount on both services at the same time. "Household" is defined as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address as one economic unit. An "economic unit" is defined as "all adult individuals contributing to and sharing in the income and expenses of a household." Lifeline support is available to eligible low-income subscribers living in group living facilities. Lifeline applicants may demonstrate when initially enrolling in the program that any other Lifeline

⁴ Telecommunications Act of 1996, §3(37), Definition of "Rural Telephone Company:" The term "rural telephone company" means a local exchange carrier operating entity to the extent that such entity--
(A) provides common carrier service to any local exchange carrier study area that does not include either--
(i) any incorporated place of 10,000 inhabitants or more, or any part thereof, based on the most recently available population statistics of the Bureau of the Census; or
(ii) any territory, incorporated or unincorporated, included in an urbanized area, as defined by the Bureau of the Census as of August 10, 1993;
(B) provides telephone exchange service, including exchange access, to fewer than 50,000 access lines;
(C) provides telephone exchange service to any local exchange carrier study area with fewer than 100,000 access lines; or
(D) has less than 15 percent of its access lines in communities of more than 50,000 on the date of enactment of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

recipients residing at their residential address are part of a separate household by completing the one-per-household worksheet.

Cellular Telecommunications

The Commission does not regulate the service offerings of cellular providers, but does arbitrate controversies between wireless and wireline companies and with respect to some surcharges and assessments, including E-911, Wyoming Relay and the assessment for the WUSF. The Commission received and resolved 12 cellular billing and service quality complaints in 2017.

Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC Topics

- **Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC Commission Investigation of Quality of Service and Reliability**

On its own Order, the Commission initiated, an investigation into the quality, reliability and availability of Qwest Corporation's d/b/a CenturyLink QC (the Company) telecommunications service in its service areas in which old, inadequate, unserviceable, or obsolete equipment remains in service. Docket No. 90000-113-XI-10. In its Order Initiating Investigation issued October 13, 2010, the Commission took judicial notice of the statewide quality of service investigation (Docket No. 90000-104-XI-08); the quality of service investigation in the Lander-Riverton area (Docket No. 90000-96-XI-07); the Karen King complaint (Docket No. 70000-1269-TC-06); the Kathi Cramer-Averill complaint, Docket No. 70023-TC-05-78; and General Order 73, a rulemaking case to implement telecommunications service quality standards. After conducting its extensive quality of service investigation, including several public hearings, the Commission issued its Memorandum Opinion, Findings and Order Closing Investigation on March 18, 2014. The Commission found that CenturyLink QC was not providing reasonably adequate service to all of its customers served by the Lusk Exchange, particularly those customers in Zones 2 and 3 of the Exchange, and directed the Company to immediately take technically feasible and economically reasonable action to improve the quality of the service, reliability, and availability of its telecommunications service. This remedial action included implementation of the Company's proposed Lusk Service Quality Improvement Plan (LSQIP), compliance filings, and status reports. Upon its own motion at its regular Open Meeting on February 28, 2017, the Commission reopened the record in Docket No. 90000-113-XI-10.

On January 27, 2015, the Commission issued its *Order Initiating Investigation* in Docket No. 90000-122-XI-15 to investigate the quality, reliability, and availability of CenturyLink QC's telecommunications service in Zones 2 and 3 of its Wheatland exchange pursuant to open meeting action taken on January 20, 2015. This investigation resulted from a written formal Complaint and Request for Hearing filed by approximately 49 customers of CenturyLink QC residing in Zones 2 and 3 of the Wheatland exchange, specifically the Sybille Canyon area. This investigation remains open and is on-going.

The Commission's investigation in Docket No. 900001-128-XI-16, resulted from e-mail communication received from Joe Baron, Crook County Attorney, regarding the telephone service in Crook County, Wyoming. Mr. Baron provided copies of messages from Jeanne Whalen, Vice Chairwoman, Crook County Board of Commissioners, and other written descriptions of service quality and reliability problems with the telephone service in the Aladdin area and other rural portions of Crook County, Wyoming. On August 4, 2016, at its regular Open Meeting the Commission determined the information presented by Mr. Baron required an investigation of the quality, reliability, and availability of CenturyLink QC's essential telecommunications service in Zones 2 and 3 in rural areas in Crook County, Wyoming. On August 30, 2016, the Commission issued its Order Initiating Investigation of CenturyLink QC's telecommunications service in Zones 2 and 3 of the rural areas of Crook County, Wyoming. This investigation remains open and is on-going.

The Commission has received, and continues to receive, numerous complaints from the public and CenturyLink QC's customers concerning the quality, reliability, and availability of CenturyLink QC's telecommunications service, principally in its service areas in which old, inadequate, unserviceable, or obsolete equipment remains in service.

At its February 28, 2017, regular Open Meeting, after discussion of continuing service quality and reliability issues and unresolved complaints, the general similarity of the service quality and reliability complaints and issues in the three exchanges, common obstacles to the resolution of those issues, and the potential benefits of consolidation, the Commission determined that consolidation of the three investigations (Docket No's. 90000-113-XI-10, 90000-112-XI-15 and 90000-128-XI-16) would provide for an efficient and comprehensive evaluation of the issues. The hearing for these dockets took place from October 25-26, 2017. On December 28, 2017, the Office of Consumer Advocate and CenturyLink filed a Joint Motion to suspend the procedural schedule in this investigation as the parties work through settlement negotiations. Currently, deliberations in this case have been temporarily vacated, pending the outcome of settlement negotiations between the Company and the OCA.

- **Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC: Ron and Alyce Carter Formal Complaint**

On September 21, 2016, Ron and Alyce Carter filed a formal complaint against Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC alleging unreliable and intermittent telephone service in Zone 3 of the Lusk, Wyoming Exchange. A hearing was held at the Commission on February 8, 2017, to hear the specific complaints from Ron and Alyce Carter and their surrounding neighbors. The Commission decided at that time to give the Company 90 days to make improvements. On July 13, 2017, the Commission held a second hearing to hear about improvements the Company has made. Ron and Alyce Carter indicated the service had not improved in the preceding 90 days. Public deliberations were held on July 24, 2017. The Commission found that the Carter's telecommunication service was not adequate and ordered CenturyLink to credit the Carter's 50% of their telecom bills from date of application until the date an alternative backup service is in place. CenturyLink was further ordered to pay for the alternative backup service and ordered that the backup

service must have a local telephone number, local 911 access and a battery backup. This docket will also become part of the above quality of service and reliability dockets.

- **Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC: Uncredited FUSF Balance**

The Commission issued a *Memorandum Opinion, Findings and Order* in Docket No. 70000-1424-TI-09 (Record No. 12149) on August 19, 2013 (*Order*), finding that under a 1999 Price Plan, the Company agreed to reduce prices in high-cost areas by crediting bills with FUSF support the Company received. From the effective date of the Price Plan, October 1, 1999, through December 31, 2012, the Company received \$6,991,995 more FUSF revenue than it credited to customers. Part of the reason for this accumulation is the Company's approach to the calculation of distributions of FUSF and WUSF, that in-turn resulted in CenturyLink receiving WUSF support it should not have received. The Commission Ordered the use of a different approach, which will require distribution of the accumulated excess of undistributed credits back to its customers. CenturyLink is in the process of refunding this excess back to its customers by charging its base rate of \$23.10 to all essential service customers in high-cost zones, rather than high-cost zone rates. As a result of continued FUSF support to the Company and declining line counts, the uncredited FUSF balance has increased to \$9,671,061 as of December 31, 2017.

Consumer Issues

Telecommunications Complaints

The overall number of utility complaints received by the Commission increased from 260 in 2016 to 279 in 2017. **Figure 5** provides a percentage breakdown of the complaints received by the Commission during the reporting year, and places the volume of telecommunications complaints into perspective:

Figure 5. Consumer Complaints

Year	Water	Gas	Electric	Local Telecom	Long Distance Telecom	Cellular
2014	2%	27%	30%	40%	1%	
2015	2%	27%	31%	39%	1%	
2016	2%	29%	33%	35%	1%	
2017	10%	23%	30%	35%	1%	1%

Although the Commission sees a substantial number of telecommunications complaints attributable to the existence of competitive telecommunications markets, many complaints concern more “traditional” subjects such as service quality, support for advanced services, availability of service enhancements, billing errors and disagreements, and misunderstanding of various charges appearing on bills. The Commission does not regulate wireless or cable services, but it does help customers contact cable and wireless companies.

Some Problematic Areas Persist

- The Complaint Section still receives complaints when telephone companies misquote the cost of services to customers or give them incorrect information. Misquotes are most often significant in dollar amount and create billing discrepancies.
- Local number portability requirements in Wyoming have helped to decrease problems experienced by consumers in changing from one service provider to another. Companies must work together to release a customer's line and ensure that it is working properly with the newly chosen service provider. Procedures for requesting and implementing carrier changes appear to be working, even if some problems persist. The Complaint Section processed 3 complaints for consumers not successful in porting their phone numbers. Many of the complaints involved changes from a landline local service provider to a cellular provider.
- Consumers are unhappy that local exchange companies allow third party charges on their bills. If consumers do not scrutinize their bills, they do not notice these charges.
- Consumers in certain rural areas of Wyoming are still experiencing quality and reliability issues with their telephone service which includes static, phantom 911 calls, extended outages, phantom ringing during night time hours, dropped calls and weather related outages. The unreliable telephone service impacts residents, businesses and emergency services. Our Commission currently has one open investigation into these service issues and the local service provider as discussed above.

Information Requests

In addition to the 279 complaints received during the reporting year, the Commission also received 18 customer requests for information. Most of these questions concerned the need for additional and higher speed service, cable TV, price and service charges, customer deposits, telemarketing, wanting more choice of providers in their service territories, municipal water providers, and calls about obtaining the free "Obama phone". Customers remain very interested in the details of the taxes, fees, surcharges and distance charges appearing on their telephone bills. Customers often want charges verified and seek regulatory and legislative action to eliminate them. The public continues to show a general interest in understanding the telecommunications industry and regulation.