

2000 Consumer Affairs Division Report



South Dakota Public
Utilities Commission

Leni Healy, Director

Division Responsibilities



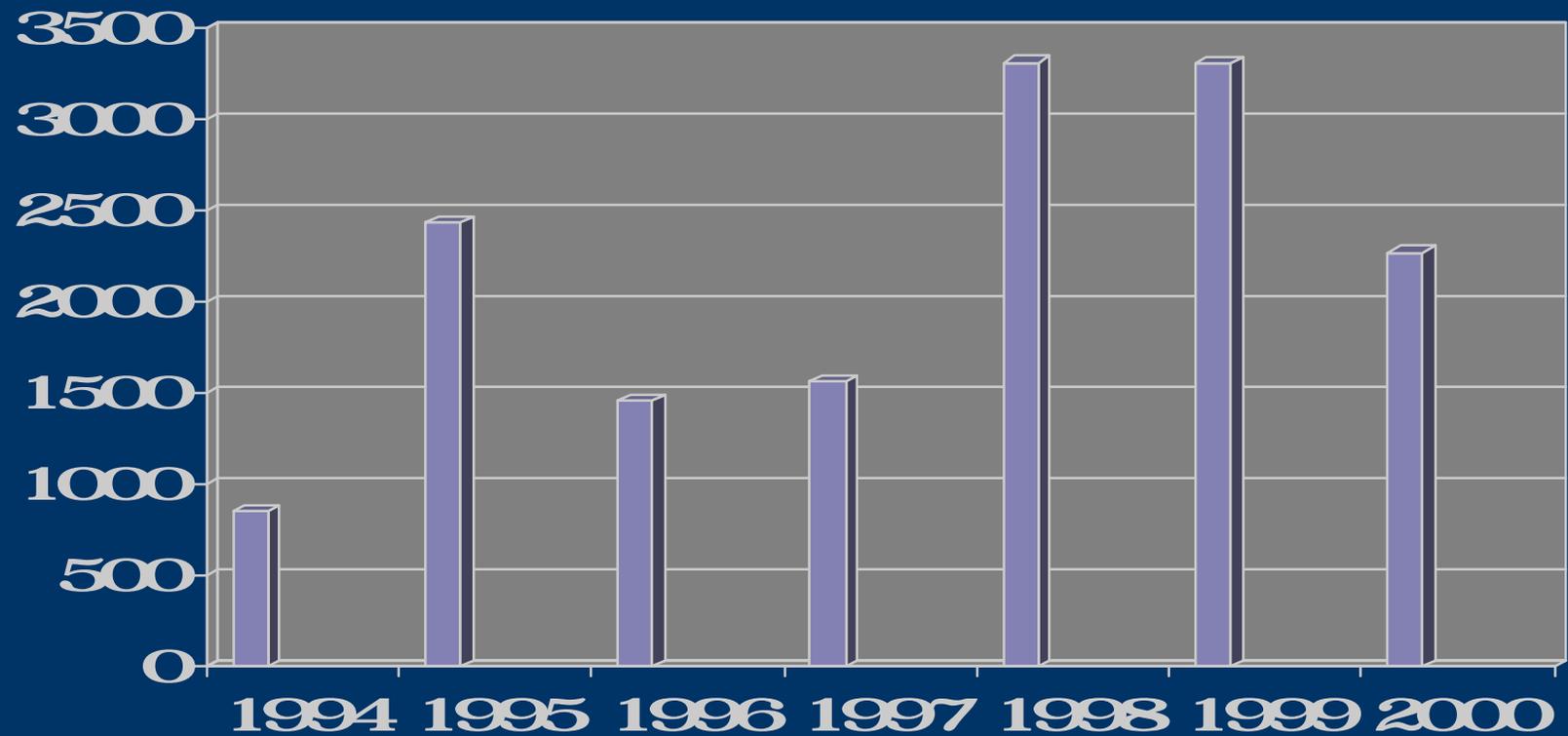
- ◆ Investigate consumer complaints
- ◆ Negotiate settlements between consumers and utility companies
- ◆ Consumer Outreach and Education
- ◆ Advise Commission on consumer issues
- ◆ Assist consumers when addressing the Commission
- ◆ Develop recommendations for change in rules

Organization of the Division

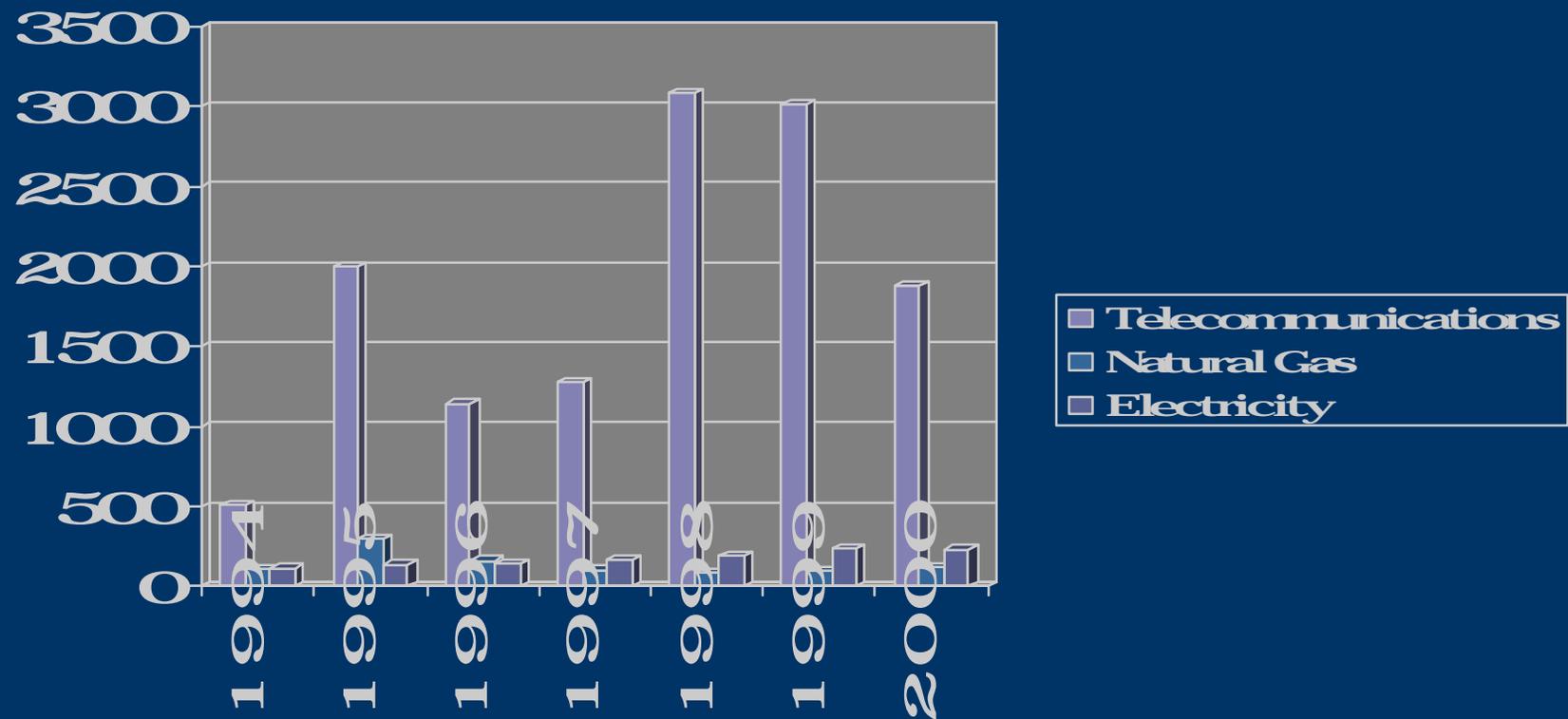


- ◆ The Consumer Affairs Division is composed of two complaint investigators and the division director.

of Consumer Contacts 1994-2000



Consumer Contacts *by industry* 1994-2000



Chief Consumer Issues (Telecommunications)



- Slamming (377)
- Billing (285)
- Fluffing (*raising rates without notice* - 178)
- Delayed installation (99)
- Cramming (97)
- Poor Service (79)
- Disconnection (76)
- Deceptive telemarketer (31)
- Won't disconnect (15)
- Directory Assistance (13)
- Collect Calls (13)

Companies Complained Against *(Telecommunications)*



- Qwest/U S WEST (444)
- AT&T (389)
- MCI (178)
- McLeodUSA (119)
- OLS - 102
- Excel (66)
- Sprint (59)
- FirsTel/Ionex (50)
- Business Options (27)
- Golden West (20)
- Midco (17)
- Vartec (15)
- Touch America (14)
- Cellular One (11)

Chief Consumer Issues (*Natural Gas*)



- High gas prices (37)
- Disconnections (24)
- Billing issues (16)
- Estimated billings (5)
- Won't Disconnect (4)
- Poor Service (3)
- Budget plan (2)
- Repair service (2)

Companies Complained Against *(Natural Gas)*



- **MidAmerican Energy**

(49 complaints/66,823 natural gas customers)

- **Montana Dakota Utilities**

(48 complaints/39,735 natural gas customers)

- **Northwestern Public Service**

(14 complaints/40,112 natural gas customers)

- **Municipal (1)**

Chief Consumer Issues *(Electricity)*



- Disconnection (104)
- Billing (24)
- Outages (20)
- High prices (15)
- Drop Box locations (6)
- Poor Service (5)
- Payment plan (5)
- Delayed installation (4)
- Estimated readings (4)
- Easements (4)
- Late Fees (4)
- Deposits (3)
- Won't Disconnect (3)

Companies Complained Against *(Electricity)*

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- NSP/Xcel (77 complaints/66,519 electric customers)
 - Northwestern Public Service (52 complaints/57,364 electric customers)
 - Black Hills Power & Light (36 complaints/56,143 electric customers)
 - Electric Cooperatives (34)
 - Municipal (10)
 - Otter Tail Power (5 complaints/11,580 electric customers)

\$ Recovered in 2000



- Through the efforts of the PUC, South Dakota consumers were able to recover over **\$275,000**.
- In addition, fines and penalties of over **\$52,500** assessed by the PUC were added to the state treasury.