

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS  
FOR THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Joint Petition for Approval  
of Indirect Transfer of Control of Qwest  
Operating Companies to CenturyLink

Summary of Public Comments

Jim Lessard questioned how two land line companies would work together after the merger and whether CenturyLink could afford to buy Qwest. He noted that CenturyLink's home office is in Monroe, Louisiana, and the regional office is in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. He also noted that much of CenturyLink's workforce was not unionized. In a separate letter, he questioned whether CenturyLink would honor the contracts between Qwest and Verizon, DirectTV, Dex and AT&T (for wireless, television, yellow pages, and Wifi services, respectively).<sup>1</sup>

Ray Owens objected to the merger on the basis that it would benefit company directors, not stockholders or customers. He asked the Commission to show the real reason for the merger.<sup>2</sup>

Daryn McBeth of the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council described the importance of telecommunication services, including access to high speed internet, to the long-term sustainability, competitiveness, and growth of Minnesota's food and agriculture industry. He urged approval of the merger on the basis that it would result in enhanced access to broadband and other new telecommunication services in both urban and rural areas of Minnesota.<sup>3</sup>

Ken Warner, President of the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, supported the proposed merger between CenturyLink and Qwest. The Willmar Lakes Area Chamber represents more than 500 business and professional members throughout Kandiyohi County. He asserted that the combined resources of CenturyLink and Qwest would enhance the communications infrastructure in Minnesota and that additional network investment would enable

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<sup>1</sup> Public Comment eFiled January 3, 2011, eDocket No. 20111-58079-01.

<sup>2</sup> Public Comment eFiled January 3, 2011, eDocket No. 20111-58079-01.

<sup>3</sup> Public Comment eFiled December 27, 2010, eDocket No. 201012-57873-01.

broadband options that could help rural as well as urban areas achieve their economic development goals.<sup>4</sup>

Allan Bakke, Program Director of Big Buddies of Western Community Action, provided a non-profit perspective on the proposed merger of CenturyLink and Qwest Communications. Western Community Action serves residents in five counties in southwestern Minnesota, by providing food and clothing, emergency housing, education, and transportation. He stated that both CenturyLink and Qwest have provided the organization with financial support, including funding for the Big Buddies Program and an academic mentoring program. Mr. Bakke noted that both CenturyLink and Qwest have made a commitment to the communities they serve through grants to both metropolitan and rural non-profits. Big Buddies of Western Community Action supports the decision of CenturyLink and Qwest to combine their resources in order to participate in the increasingly competitive communications marketplace.<sup>5</sup>

Nicki Klanderud, President of the Cambridge Area Chamber of Commerce, supported the proposed merger. The Chamber's membership of more than 250 businesses depends on a broad array of telecommunication services to support growth. The Cambridge Chamber urged the Commission to review and approve the proposed merger as quickly as possible.<sup>6</sup>

Russell Vance noted that since Windstream Communications acquired Iowa Telecom, close to 75% of the employees from Sherburne Rural Telephone and Bishop Communications have been terminated or will lose their jobs by the year's end. He expressed concern that similar job losses will occur with the merger of CenturyLink and Qwest.<sup>7</sup>

Dennis H. Schroeder noted that he had received service from Century Tel in Wisconsin. He asserted that the company's capability is not comparable to that of Qwest. He does not believe that Century Tel has the strength and ability to service Qwest customers.<sup>8</sup>

Michael Sutherland stated his belief that Qwest has been dishonest and abusive in its customer dealings. He maintained that Qwest is too large and many of its customers have no alternative provider for essential communication services. He contended that this problem arises from Qwest having too large a share of the market and facing too little competition in this area. He asserted that the merger would likely make matters worse.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Public Comment eFiled November 15, 2010, eDocket No. 201011-56521-01.

<sup>5</sup> Public Comment eFiled November 8, 2010, eDocket No. 201011-56285-01.

<sup>6</sup> Public Comment eFiled November 1, 2010, eDocket No. 201011-56073-01.

<sup>7</sup> Public Comment eFiled November 1, 2010, eDocket No. 201011-56073-01.

<sup>8</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 29, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55947-01.

<sup>9</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 29, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55947-01.

Silence Do Good urged that the merger of Qwest and CenturyLink be disapproved for several reasons, including poor service quality and increased expenses that senior citizens will likely face for service.<sup>10</sup>

Todd Klingel, President and CEO of the Regional Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, wrote in support of the merger of CenturyLink and Qwest. He expressed his opinion that technology is rapidly changing and that Minnesota consumers have many choices for their communications needs. He believes the merger between CenturyLink and Qwest will provide a greatly expanded network, with service in 37 states and a national fiber network stretching 180,000 route miles.<sup>11</sup>

Gary Skalko, Mayor of Mountain Iron, stated that he was not familiar with CenturyLink but had the opportunity to learn more about the proposed merger over the past several weeks. He concluded that CenturyLink has sufficient operational ability and experience in communities like Mountain Iron. He also stated that Qwest had previously responded to the concerns of Mountain Iron residents by expanding high-speed internet service in the community. Mr. Skalko stated his belief that the merger would prepare the community to meet future challenges.<sup>12</sup>

Charlie Weaver, Executive Director of the Minnesota Business Partnership, expressed support for the merger of CenturyLink and Qwest. He contended that the ability to adapt, grow, compete and remain financially strong would separate long-term industry players from those that will fail. He asserted that the merger will create a stronger company with an expanded network and a broader range of products and services. He believes the merger will make more advanced communications solutions available for business and consumers.<sup>13</sup>

Teresa Bohnen, President of the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce, expressed support for the merger. She believes it will provide the opportunity for the merged company to adapt, grow, and remain financially strong in a competitive market.<sup>14</sup>

David Ross, President and CEO of the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce, wrote in support of the merger between Qwest and CenturyLink. Mr. Ross suggested that the merger would allow the companies to meet financial challenges while offering improved services to business and residential customers.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 25, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55809-01.

<sup>11</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 18, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55577-01.

<sup>12</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 11, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55376-01.

<sup>13</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 4, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55165-01.

<sup>14</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 4, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55165-01.

<sup>15</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 11, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55376-01.

Richard C. Diedrichsen expressed support for the merger. He has had Qwest telephone service for more than 29 years and found that it was the only telecommunications company in Minnesota that specifically solicited input from senior citizens and from people with motion, vision, speech, and hearing limitations, on methods of assuring that their products and services were accessible. He asserted that the merger would build capacity for the company and allow for improved services to all Minnesotans.<sup>16</sup>

L. A. Ellis had Qwest service in 2004, and she wrote to say that her service issues took months to resolve. Qwest ultimately acknowledged responsibility for the problem. While she noted that the leadership team in 2004 is no longer running the company, the experience continues to bother her.<sup>17</sup>

Delmer and Mary Swanson have been seeking high-speed internet in their neighborhood. They are concerned that the merger could cause an increase in telephone fees with no improvement in service, in which case they would oppose the merger.<sup>18</sup>

Nicholas Barker is opposed to the merger because he feels he will not benefit from it.<sup>19</sup>

Lisa Jacobs expressed concern about what will happen to the service she currently has with Qwest and Verizon if the merger occurs. She would like to know if there will be any changes to the packages and/or service plans and whether penalties will apply if the new plans are not affordable. She has not found any information on this issue and requested assistance in obtaining such information.<sup>20</sup>

Mike Sarafolean wrote to say he does not feel that Qwest properly maintains its lines in Nininger Township near Hastings. He contended that tree trimming is needed, but has not been completed. He urged the Commission to require that Qwest complete any work of this nature before the merger is approved. He stated that current rates already include a maintenance and tree trimming component, and therefore ratepayers have already paid for the service. He does not want to pay more in the future to a new owner. He provided pictures of poles requiring maintenance along County Road 42 near Hastings.<sup>21</sup>

Craig Stotesbery suggested that the merger could jeopardize the health care coverage of Qwest retirees. He suggested making the protection of this coverage a condition of the merger.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Public Comment eFiled October 4, 2010, eDocket No. 201010-55165-01.

<sup>17</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>18</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>19</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>20</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>21</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>22</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

R. P. Labrie wrote to say that if this merger is allowed, Minnesota will lose several thousand full time jobs, customer service will suffer, and rates will increase.<sup>23</sup>

Mark Myles said he had tried unsuccessfully to secure DSL service from Qwest. He stated that Minnesota lags behind the rest of the nation with regard to high-speed internet service, and he asserted that the Commission should require a plan for expanding such service before approving the merger.<sup>24</sup>

Dorothy Maki wrote that she does not want the merger to be approved in part because of her concern that competition will be reduced.<sup>25</sup>

Several customers of Integra Telecom wrote with similar comments. Bryan Lervick, President and CFO of Northern Power Products, Inc., noted that CenturyLink will be the first rural carrier to acquire a regional Bell Operating Company. He asserted that CenturyLink has little to no experience serving major urban areas like Minneapolis-St. Paul. Mr. Lervick expressed concern that the service of all residents and businesses in the state that rely directly or indirectly on Qwest's network may be adversely affected by the merger. He requested that the Commission review those aspects of the merger to ensure that neither service quality nor local service competition is harmed by the transaction.<sup>26</sup> These concerns were repeated by Mark Lewis of Bituminous Roadways, Inc.,<sup>27</sup> David Sack, IT Manager of the City of Coon Rapids,<sup>28</sup> Barb Hofmeister, Property Manager of Court International, LLC,<sup>29</sup> Micah Myers, IT Director of the City of Saint Cloud,<sup>30</sup> Scott Newman of Newman Long Term Care,<sup>31</sup> and Renee J. Iwen, Office Manager of Carlson, Caspers, Vandeburgh & Lindquist, PA.<sup>32</sup>

Larry Foote, President of the Big Pine Lake Property Owners Association, wrote to oppose the merger of CenturyLink and Qwest. He related the frustration and resentment of the Association's 150-plus members over the failure of CenturyLink-Embarq, and its predecessor organization, to provide requested DSL service. Although the necessary hardware and software have been installed all around them—providing DSL service north, south, east and west—they have been left in a black hole. Mr. Foote suggested that the merged company would be even less willing to consider their requests for service.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>24</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>25</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>26</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 24, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54809-01.

<sup>27</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 24, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54809-01.

<sup>28</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 24, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54809-01.

<sup>29</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 24, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54809-01.

<sup>30</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 24, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54809-01.

<sup>31</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 10, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54612-01.

<sup>32</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 10, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54612-01.

<sup>33</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 24, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54809-01.

Gertrude Seidl supported the merger of Qwest and CenturyLink. She recounted her good experiences as a Qwest customer and said that she believes Qwest has helped her keep in touch with many aspects of life.<sup>34</sup>

Gary W. Smith, President of Rochester Area Economic Development, Inc., wrote to support Qwest's merger with CenturyLink because he believes it will meet the needs of customers. He maintained that the merged company will be much stronger financially and should have sufficient cash flow to invest in new technology, as well as service its debt and provide investors a decent return on their investments. Mr. Smith urged that the Commission's approval of the merger would help the Rochester area achieve its goals for long-term, sustained economic growth.<sup>35</sup>

Mary Lohnes, Regulatory Affairs Manager for Midcontinent Communications, noted that Midcontinent offers cable service, high-speed Internet and telephone service across North and South Dakota and also serves several Minnesota communities outside of the metropolitan area. It is an authorized CLEC in the Dakotas and Minnesota. Ms. Lohnes indicated that Midcontinent competes with Qwest in many areas and must also exchange traffic with Qwest pursuant to interconnection agreements (ICAs).

She commented that there have been difficulties in the business relationship between Midcontinent and Qwest over the years. Although the relationship has generally stabilized at the present time, she indicated that Midcontinent does continue to have some billing disputes and operations issues with Qwest involving service calls, replacement of bad demarcation points, timely installation of facilities at end user locations, billing for Directory Assistance calls on disconnected lines, obtaining tandem data in order to bill carriers in several exchanges for carrier access, and other matters.

Ms. Lohnes noted that the transition was very difficult and time-consuming when Midcontinent converted service from resale of Qwest's service to Qwest Platform Plus. She also indicated that, when Qwest did a switch upgrade in Rapid City, South Dakota, it caused crossed phone lines and a loss of end-user information. She expressed concern that this type of issue could be replicated in Minnesota with the transition from Qwest to CenturyLink, and that, if changes are made to Qwest's systems and operations, it could result in more service problems, billing disputes, and disrupted service for Midcontinent customers. Although Midcontinent does not currently operate in any CenturyLink exchanges, Ms. Lohnes believes based on testimony filed in this matter that CenturyLink will be more difficult to work with and has less reliable operations systems than Qwest.

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<sup>34</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 24, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54809-01.

<sup>35</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 10, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54612-01.

Midcontinent supports placing merger conditions on approval to ensure that there is a forum for competitive carriers and the new company to work on any issues that arise; that penalties are in place to create incentives for the new company to comply with merger conditions; that ICAs and service intervals remain in place for at least 3.5 years following the merger; that service penalties are established to create proper incentives and protect consumers; and that Qwest systems for resold and wholesale services remain in place after the merger and are only changed if the new system is better and proper testing and training of competitive carriers has occurred. Midcontinent also urged the Commission to require the Joint Petitioners to provide more detailed information regarding the impact of the merger on the telecommunications industry and consumers and supply a complete integration plan prior to approving the merger, as suggested by the CWA.<sup>36</sup>

Charles L. Rike, a former employee of Northwestern Bell who later retired from AT&T, objected to the merger. He contended that service has deteriorated and prices have increased since the AT&T break-up. Mr. Rike expressed concern that the merger will cause losses in employment, reductions in safety programs, and generally will only make matters worse.<sup>37</sup>

Norman Andersen called to protest the merger of Qwest with a telephone company that he believes is not adequately funded.<sup>38</sup>

Linda Sullivan called to object to the merger.<sup>39</sup>

William F. Kruper wrote to say that he is deeply concerned about the impact of the merger on his pension and healthcare benefits. He described the loss or reduction of these benefits as “financially disastrous” both to him and to numerous other Qwest retirees. He also expressed concern that Qwest could be dismantled once the merger is approved. He urged the Commission to preclude CenturyLink from selling Qwest properties after the merger in order to preserve the quality of service now provided. He also requested that the Commission require the post-merger company to retain all of the areas and properties presently under Qwest ownership.<sup>40</sup>

Mrs. Darnell Drinkall maintained that when Century Tel became CenturyLink her bill increased. She expressed concern that the merger would increase her bill again.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 10, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54392-01.

<sup>37</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 10, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54612-01.

<sup>38</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 13, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54388-01.

<sup>39</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 13, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54388-01.

<sup>40</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 7, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54195-01.

<sup>41</sup> Public Comment eFiled September 7, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54195-01.

Robert Mayfield called to oppose to the merger. He does not think CenturyLink is in a sound position to go forward with the merger, since it just completed another merger six months ago.<sup>42</sup>

Yolanda Clark, currently a Qwest customer, expressed her opinion that the bigger companies get, the more money they have, and the more influence they have on the political process. If the companies merge, she will take her business elsewhere.<sup>43</sup>

Terry Mahling, currently a Qwest customer, stated that his research on CenturyLink reflected a company having terrible customer service; poor internet access; poor service response; and misleading services, especially regarding the cost of service packages.<sup>44</sup>

James Hoolihan, a Northwestern Bell retiree, expressed his belief that the merger is in the best interest of Minnesota telephone customers. He receives a Qwest pension and does not want to see that threatened in any way.<sup>45</sup>

Bernice Lillquist finds the merger of companies confusing. She is satisfied with the way things are and wants the Commission to keep it that way.<sup>46</sup>

L. Francois opposed the merger on the grounds that it will potentially reduce competition and that it will fail to benefit residents.<sup>47</sup>

Dolores Fink opposed the merger. She noted that she has received excellent service from Qwest, but she is uncertain about CenturyLink.<sup>48</sup>

Frank and Joanne Krejca receive service with CenturyLink at a residence in Florida. They related their experience with CenturyLink's autowithdrawal payment system, which withdraws their payments eight to 12 days before the due date. They expressed their belief that CenturyLink engages in bad practices. They oppose the merger.<sup>49</sup>

Kurt Anderson described how, in 2007, Qwest imposed a difficult set of email domain changes that have adversely affected his law firm. He requested that the Commission prohibit this conduct and affirmatively require companies to maintain all email domains.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 30, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53944-01.

<sup>43</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 30, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53944-01.

<sup>44</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 30, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53944-01.

<sup>45</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 23, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53757-01.

<sup>46</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 23, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53757-01.

<sup>47</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 23, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53757-01.

<sup>48</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 23, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53757-01.

<sup>49</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 23, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53757-01.

<sup>50</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

Chris Bryant urged the Commission to obtain answers for the following questions: (1) will the combined company guarantee that there will be no price increase within all entities or services for one year; (2) will the combined company provide a specific description of the benefits for customers, company shareholders, and employees; and (3) will the merged company be called Qwest, to reflect the greater customer footprint of that corporate identity.<sup>51</sup>

Bruce Boyne expressed his belief that the Commission should be coming up with ways to break up these huge corporations rather than allowing them to get bigger. He explained that in rural Minnesota, customers are not fortunate enough to choose between telephone suppliers. Customer service seems to deteriorate as the corporation gets larger. For these reasons, he is opposed to the merger.<sup>52</sup>

Bill Dean is strongly opposed to the merger based on his experience with rental condominiums in Florida, using CenturyLink for land-line telephone service. His order was not timely completed, and his efforts to correct the problem resulted in a difficult situation that was never fully resolved. He urged the Commission to keep Minnesota away from that kind of poor customer service.<sup>53</sup>

Bennett Dy is opposed to the merger. He said that Qwest already provides good service; CenturyLink is an unknown regarding service.<sup>54</sup>

Bill Dix is opposed to the merger. For years CenturyLink and its predecessors have talked about broadband but have never delivered it to his area. He obtained mobile broadband through Verizon and has reasonable, but very expensive, service. His inquiry to CenturyLink obtained the reply that the service would be made available if he obtained another 50 customers to order it as well. Mr. Dix suspects that Qwest customers will be taking a step backwards with CenturyLink as their provider.<sup>55</sup>

B. Huberty lives about 25 miles from Minneapolis and St. Paul and has been unable to receive broadband service from CenturyLink for more than eight years. The commentator recommended having both companies provide at a minimum 100% full broadband coverage to their customers before allowing the merger.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>52</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>53</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

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<sup>56</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

D. H. Johnsen wrote to share his belief that with the merger a monopoly will occur. The commentator recommended not letting the company merge to preserve competition.<sup>57</sup>

Elizabeth Lamin stated her belief that the merger will significantly limit competition and ultimately hurt consumers by raising rates. She noted that CenturyLink just merged with another company in the last year. She opined that its rush to purchase as many companies as possible does not benefit the general public. The resulting enormous company will not be able to integrate to serve Qwest customers as effectively and as competitively.<sup>58</sup>

Jerry Linser said that Qwest service is at best weak, and the new company will not change the level of service provided. He asserted that, as with past mergers of this type, the only persons to gain are the CEOs and the large investors. He recommended that the merger not be approved because it will not enhance service. He expressed his desire for the Commission to keep utility companies at a manageable size and to stay properly regulated.<sup>59</sup>

A commentator described his hope for a two-year commitment from CenturyLink for no price increases.<sup>60</sup>

John Mosher is a disabled individual living on a small federal pension. He described his efforts to get high-speed internet for twenty years. He contended that Qwest had denied him this service, and a PUC Commissioner has told him that he would not have high-speed internet in his lifetime. Mr. Mosher detailed the frustrations in seeking employment or even installing software updates with his dial-up internet connection being so slow and with disconnections every five to ten minutes. While Mr. Mosher contended that he would love to have any company other than Qwest as his provider, he said he has heard that CenturyLink has an even worse track record.<sup>61</sup>

David Stewart said he is strongly opposed to the merger because it is an effort to eliminate competition.<sup>62</sup>

Darman Taluki of Digirati Networks, Inc., expressed his opposition to the merger. He believes that CenturyLink lacks the expertise or the size to absorb Qwest. He compared the likely outcome to when Qwest purchased U.S. West and poor service resulted. He contended that, with virtually no competition in the market, the post-merger company will be able to dictate price hikes and other negative impacts on consumers.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>58</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>59</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>60</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>61</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>62</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>63</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

Andy Tan expressed his support for competition and objected to the merger as monopolizing DSL access in Minnesota.<sup>64</sup>

Dianna Thompson does not know much about CenturyLink and would prefer to keep her business with Qwest.<sup>65</sup>

Paul and Loretta Trepanier are opposed to the merger.<sup>66</sup>

Eric Watkins questioned whether the merger would abrogate his DSL “Price for Life” contractual agreement with Qwest.<sup>67</sup>

Steve White expressed concern that the merger will reduce his service and extend the length of time before high-speed internet is available to his home in Faribault. He also expressed concern that CenturyLink, as a smaller company, would be burdened with debt to pay for the merger and thereby unable to maintain or improve service to Minnesota.<sup>68</sup>

Tom Adams is currently served by Qwest DSL at a speed of 1.5 mbps, the maximum available in Rochester. He said when he was finally able to open the 60-page document to read about the merger, the document could not be searched. He questioned why the document was not searchable.<sup>69</sup>

Stephanie Aaron said she is against the merger. She is concerned about the quality and price of her phone service being affected by the merger.<sup>70</sup>

Paul Boettger is concerned that there will be a hike in the cost of telephone service and a “sticker shock” increase for high-speed internet if the merger is allowed.<sup>71</sup>

E. A. Cox described his concern that prices will rise and that the interests of older customers will be forgotten during this difficult economy. The commentator asked the Commission to disapprove the merger.<sup>72</sup>

A commentator identified only as “Deathburger” has had Qwest service within the last year, and currently has CenturyLink service. This customer found Qwest’s services satisfactory but has had nothing but trouble with CenturyLink.

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<sup>64</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>65</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>66</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>67</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02; *see also* Public Comment (Watkins) eFiled September 27, 2010, eDocket No. 20109-54820-01.

<sup>68</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-02.

<sup>69</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

<sup>70</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

<sup>71</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

<sup>72</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

The customer maintained that CenturyLink transferred long-distance service without permission and refused to adjust the bill even after being informed that the service was not requested or desired. The customer does not want CenturyLink to be in a position of broader control.<sup>73</sup>

Tom Hell asked the Commission to ensure that the present programs and deals Qwest made with customers remain valid as many customers have relied on those promises.<sup>74</sup>

Jacqueline Hubbard would like to know if the approved merger would change the current phone bill along with the service.<sup>75</sup>

Nancy Eiben is a retiree from Qwest Communications and expressed her concern about the potential for changes to her retirement benefits arising from the merger. She urged the Commission to ensure that employees and retirees are treated justly and with honor by either company.<sup>76</sup>

John Jankila expressed his hope that the Commission has verified that the merger will result in service improvements. He suggested that it is not always true that a company is better because it is bigger. He noted that he has been a Qwest customer for years and he would like to see the system improve, while keeping costs at current levels.<sup>77</sup>

John Iacono suggested that a highly leveraged buyout would result in rate increases and said he wants assurance of no rate increases for at least two years after the merger.<sup>78</sup>

Joy Jurewicz compared the proposed merger with the Qwest-U.S. West merger and suggested that job cuts would negatively affect service. She suggested that the merger be conditioned on limiting job reductions to no more than 5% of the existing jobs in a geographic area. She noted that accounts she serviced when she worked for Qwest have not been assigned to anyone for servicing.<sup>79</sup>

Brian Knappek said he thinks the merger would be good for rural customers because of CenturyLink's experience in providing rural service.<sup>80</sup>

An anonymous commentator questioned what impact to existing bundled packages would result from the merger.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

<sup>74</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

<sup>75</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

<sup>76</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

<sup>77</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

<sup>78</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

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<sup>80</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 17, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53557-01.

Dan King said he is opposed to the merger, based on bad reviews of CenturyLink's service and feedback from a CenturyLink customer who is having problems with broadband internet.<sup>82</sup>

Karen Larson compared the merger to the Qwest-U.S. West merger and asserted that prices for cellular, internet, and DirectTV services are all going to increase to the point of becoming unaffordable.<sup>83</sup>

James Lendway is opposed to merger of Qwest and CenturyLink. He said he believes that mergers of big companies stifle competition and should not be allowed.<sup>84</sup>

Marti Maltby, Case Manager for GRH Housing, suggested that she would support the merger if it meant that the managers at Qwest are removed from their positions and the entire customer service division of Qwest is revamped to rectify the problems the company currently creates for its customers. The commentator said that Qwest's failure to implement service blocks as requested costs the non-profit agency thousands of dollars in unauthorized calls by persons receiving housing through that agency. The commentator expressed hope that the proposed merger would lead to greatly enhanced customer service over Qwest's current service level.<sup>85</sup>

Mark Howard is a Qwest customer and employee, and he wrote to support the merger.<sup>86</sup>

Chris and Joe Mauch wrote to say that CenturyLink should be required to honor all of Qwest's pricing and long-term contracts.<sup>87</sup>

Bryan Logan expressed concern about the impact of the merger on the "Price for life" and bundled Direct TV contracts he has with Qwest. He does not want to pay early termination fees or pay a higher price for the service if DirectTV is not offered.<sup>88</sup>

Mike Lorensen was a customer of CenturyTel, and he wrote to say that he was not impressed with its services. He is not in favor of the transfer of ownership. If the merger occurs, he suggested that he will switch to a different internet service provider.<sup>89</sup>

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John Poons suggested that broadband internet should be included free of charge as part of basic phone service. He believes the customer could use those savings to purchase other optional services.<sup>90</sup>

Karen Smudski is a Qwest customer who noted that her research found many negative comments on CenturyLink's billing practices. She expressed concern that if Qwest is owned by CenturyLink she will receive improper bills and poor customer service. She urged that the Commission scrutinize the merger and only allow if CenturyLink has clearly demonstrated an improved approach to both billing and customer care.<sup>91</sup>

An anonymous commentator objected to the merger unless the service remains as good or better and the rates are less for the next ten years.<sup>92</sup>

Bob Skjegstad opposed the merger of the two companies. He noted that Qwest has been a great company, and he does not want Qwest to be turned over to CenturyLink.<sup>93</sup>

Jonathan Murray urged that the Commission ensure that contracts to lock in a lifetime rate for internet service are continued in force after the merger.<sup>94</sup>

Robert Panning contracted for Qwest DSL with MSN premium with a lifetime monthly fixed fee, and he questioned whether that agreement will be honored by CenturyLink at the same monthly fee.<sup>95</sup>

Gary Person questioned whether his current agreements with Qwest will be honored and whether he will retain that "price for life" on his internet as agreed and a discount on Direct TV.<sup>96</sup>

Ed Stallings related his first-hand experience with CenturyTel at his cabin. He expressed concern over the level of internet service he will receive from CenturyLink once it acquires Qwest. Mr. Stallings questioned options will he have for obtaining a different vendor if the merger is approved.<sup>97</sup>

Terri Leino expressed concern and frustration about the proposed merger, comparing it to sales of home mortgages. The commentator suggested that "if it isn't broke, don't fix it."<sup>98</sup>

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John Thomas disapproved of the merger.<sup>99</sup>

An anonymous commentator who identified himself only as “TAXRIDDER” requested that the Commission ensure that Qwest’s lifetime internet rate of \$26 remain in effect when CenturyLink takes over.<sup>100</sup>

Dean Tulledge noted that Qwest has been unable to provide broadband service in a rural area within seven miles of Rochester. He expressed hope that CenturyLink would do better.<sup>101</sup>

Dave Linger urged the Commission to provide stability in customer choices for telecommunication services. He compared the situation to the mergers in the 1980’s and 1990’s and suggested that the financial outcomes are not sufficiently beneficial to offset the negative impact to customers.<sup>102</sup>

Nellie Harris opposed the merger on the ground that it would bring Minnesota closer to a monopoly.<sup>103</sup>

A caller identified only as “Lois” expressed concern that the merger will eliminate jobs, and if so, she opposed the merger.<sup>104</sup>

Loyal Merritt opposed the merger on the ground that it would result in less competition and higher prices.<sup>105</sup>

Kathy Letendre opposed the merger.<sup>106</sup>

Jane Pollock stated that she wants Qwest to continue.<sup>107</sup>

Charles Delve opposed the merger because it would harm consumers and result in large conglomerates.<sup>108</sup>

Theresa Rokusek opposed the merger on the basis that the company would be too large and customers would have no influence on its operations.<sup>109</sup>

Gene Thompson opposed the merger.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 16, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53536-01.

<sup>103</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 16, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53536-01.

<sup>104</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 16, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53536-01.

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<sup>109</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 16, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53536-01.

Lane Raichert is a small business owner who wrote to support the merger if it would improve customer service over Qwest's current terrible service.<sup>111</sup>

Margaret Linhart said she opposed the merger because it would result in unaffordable service.<sup>112</sup>

A commentator named Nesvick expressed concern about possible changes in price and service that may occur due to the merger.<sup>113</sup>

Roger Kohler expressed satisfaction with Qwest's residential phone service, and he opposed the merger.<sup>114</sup>

John Caess is opposed to the merger. He wants to continue doing business with Qwest.<sup>115</sup>

Elaine Magstead does not approve of the merger.<sup>116</sup>

Norman Beckman has CenturyLink service in southern Minnesota, and he uses the Bismarck cooperative service at another property in South Dakota. He said the Bismarck rates are one-third of the cost of CenturyLink. Mr. Beckman opposed the merger.<sup>117</sup>

Junelle Evenson wrote to say that she likes Qwest and does not want it to change.<sup>118</sup>

Don Koehler is opposed to the merger. He wants to keep the service local and small.<sup>119</sup>

Tom Reynolds opposed the merger on the basis that it lacked any benefits. He questioned the compensation expected by the officers of Qwest because of the merger.<sup>120</sup>

An anonymous caller stated that the merger should not affect Qwest's service. The caller considered Qwest's existing service to be dependable.<sup>121</sup>

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Becky Stuc expressed concerned as to how the merger will affect the elderly and disabled. She suggested that, while some mergers result in no initial changes, companies will often wait a few years to alter names, services and other things. The commentator asserted that such changes can be very confusing for those who are elderly and/or disabled. She said she hoped that the merger would not result in major changes for Qwest.<sup>122</sup>

Ruth Schoenfeld said she wondered if her bills would still come in the way they have before. She does not have e-mail or internet and asked to receive information by mail.<sup>123</sup>

Natalie Cook expressed her opinion that this merger is another step towards monopoly and that soon the state would have one phone company, one airline, and everything sold would be made in China.<sup>124</sup>

An anonymous caller objected to the merger.<sup>125</sup>

Philip W. Ringgenberg made two suggestions to the Commission. First, he recommended that Qwest no longer be required to provide services to other companies at a rate lower than Qwest charges its own customers. Second, he recommended that any transfer of control of Qwest be conditioned on employees and retiree benefits remaining at their existing levels.<sup>126</sup>

Laurel Yarrow opposed the merger on the ground that Qwest is already too big. She noted that big corporations should be broken up, and the current situation is nothing like the free market.<sup>127</sup>

Eunice Holmes said she hoped that the company continues to provide land lines because she does not find cell phones to have the dependability, quality, and reliability of land lines. She described her land line as being at times her life line.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Public Comment eFiled August 16, 2010, eDocket No. 20108-53536-01.

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