



NEWS

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FCC CONSUMER AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS BUREAU RELEASES QUARTERLY REPORT ON COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES PROCESSED *Data Helps Commission, Companies and the Public Track Trends*

Washington, DC – The FCC’s Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) has released the latest quarterly report on the types of inquiries and complaints the Commission has received from the public. The attached report is a tabulation of the most common inquiries and informal consumer complaints received during the first quarter of 2002 on broadcast, cable, wireless and wireline telecommunications issues.

Inquiries are defined as correspondence or communications received at the Commission from individuals seeking information on matters under the FCC’s jurisdiction. Informal consumer complaints are defined as correspondence or communications received at the FCC from individuals who complain about alleged violations of the Communications Act or FCC rules or orders by entities regulated by the FCC.

The statistics show that billing and rates complaints continue to be the largest category of consumer complaints for both wireless and wireline carriers, with corresponding high numbers of consumer inquiries regarding these subjects.

As with previous quarters, relatively few cable-related and broadcast-related complaints were filed with the FCC compared with wireline and wireless filings. With respect to cable-related complaints, billing and rate issues were by far the largest category. Complaints about allegedly indecent radio or television broadcasts continued to be the most common broadcast-related complaints. Because the FCC generally has limited authority over cable service and broadcast programming matters, consumers typically direct their complaints to the cable companies, the local franchising authorities or individual broadcast stations.

With respect to each of the subject areas, these data indicate the volume of inquiries and complaints received at the FCC. They do not include inquiries and complaints made to local and state agencies and the companies themselves. In addition, the FCC’s policy is to encourage consumers to take their complaints directly to the companies involved before filing a complaint with the FCC.

Consumers often submit complaints about matters that are outside the FCC’s jurisdiction and which are more appropriately filed with local or state agencies. In addition, the FCC receives many complaints that do not involve violations of the Communications Act or a FCC rule or order. Therefore, the existence of a complaint does not necessarily indicate wrongdoing by the company involved.

The FCC's rules are designed to make it easy for consumers to file complaints and for the companies to move expeditiously to satisfy or answer complaints. For example, the rules governing accessibility to telecommunications services and equipment by individuals with disabilities permit the filing of informal complaints about accessibility problems or concerns by any reasonable means, including postal mail, the telephone, the Internet, fax transmission and audio or video cassette recording. Consumers without disabilities similarly have the option of using regular mail, the telephone, or the Internet to lodge inquiries or complaints. Inquiries and complaints are accorded the same treatment irrespective of the method used by consumers to file them with the FCC. In some instances, the staff may request additional information or documentation that may be needed to effectively process an inquiry or complaint. Information about the Commission's complaint processes can be obtained by calling CGB's Consumer Center toll-free at 1-888-CALL-FCC (TTY users may call 1-888-TELL-FCC) or by visiting the Bureau's website at www.fcc.gov/cgb

Attached to the report is a subject reference guide that defines each complaint category.

- FCC -

Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau contact: Thomas Wyatt at (202) 418-1400.

For more information about this or any other FCC matter contact the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322), voice; or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322), TTY; email us at fccinfo@fcc.gov or visit our Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb.

QUARTERLY REPORT ON INFORMAL CONSUMER COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES RECEIVED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This reports presents data on the top categories of consumer inquiries and complaints processed by the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau during the 1st Quarter of Calendar Year 2002. Inquiries are defined as correspondence or communications received at the Commission from individuals seeking information on matters under the FCC's jurisdiction. Informal consumer complaints are defined as correspondence or communications received at the FCC from individuals who complain that actions or omissions by entities regulated by the FCC violate the Communications Act or rules or orders issued by the FCC. Consumers lodge informal complaints and inquiries with the FCC in a variety of ways: postal mail, e-mail, an internet form, fax transmissions, and toll-free phone calls.

Billing and rate-related complaints continued to be the largest category of consumer complaints against both wireless and wireline telecommunications service providers, with corresponding high numbers of consumer inquiries regarding these subjects.

As with previous quarters, relatively few cable-related and broadcast-related complaints were filed with the FCC compared to wireline and wireless filings. With respect to cable service matters, billing & rate related complaints constituted by far the largest category of cable-related complaints. Complaints about allegedly indecent radio or television broadcasts continued to be the most common broadcast-related complaints. Because the FCC generally has limited authority over cable service and broadcast programming matters, consumers typically direct complaints about these topics directly to the cable companies or local franchising authorities and to individual broadcast stations.

Also consistent with prior quarters, there continued to be a significantly higher number of cable and broadcast-related inquiries made to the FCC by consumers relative to the number of informal complaints filed in these areas. Inquiries about service-related matters and over the air reception devices (antennas) were the most common cable-related inquiries. General programming and content were the most frequently inquired about broadcast subjects.

The Commission receives many informal complaints that do not involve violations of the Communications Act or a rule or order of the Commission. The existence of a complaint does not necessarily indicate wrongdoing by the company involved.

Top Consumer Issues – Subject Category Reference Guide

CABLE SERVICES

Billing & Rates: Complaints/inquiries concerning billing matters and the rates charged for cable programming service (or expanded basic) tier on a cable system

Broadband-Related: Complaints/inquiries about the availability or quality of cable modem service.

Connections to Cable Systems: Complaints/inquiries regarding availability or quality of connections to cable systems.

Over-The-Air-Reception-Devices (OTARD) Issues: Complaints/inquiries regarding the installation, maintenance or use of antennas -- including direct-to-home satellite dishes that are less than one meter (39.37") in diameter (or of any size in Alaska), TV antennas, and wireless cable antennas -- to receive video programming

Programming Issues: Complaints/inquiries regarding program content or the choice of channels or programs available to subscribers.

Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act (SHVIA) Issues: Complaints/inquiries concerning satellite carriers provision of television broadcast (including distant or national) programming to subscribers.

Service Quality: Complaints/inquiries about the quality of service provided by cable operators.

RADIO & TELEVISION BROADCASTING

Programming Issues

- **Indecency/Obscenity:** Complaints/inquiries regarding broadcast programs that allegedly contain indecent or obscene material
- **Loud Commercials:** Complaints/inquiries regarding abrupt changes in volume during transition from regular programming to commercials
- **Religious:** Complaints/inquiries regarding religious programs
- **Violence:** Complaints/inquiries regarding violence in programs
- **General Content Criticism:** generalized concerns regarding the content of broadcast programs

WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Billing and Rates-Related – Includes the Following Subcategories:

Billing/Rates - Airtime Charges: Disputes regarding charges to subscriber for actual time spent talking on a wireless phone

Billing/Rates-Credit/Refunds/Adjustments: Disputes regarding credits, refunds, or bill adjustments

Billing/Rates - Line Items: complaints/inquiries regarding surcharges and taxes appearing on a phone bill

- Access Charge: Complaints/inquiries regarding miscellaneous line items charges
- E-911: Complaints/inquiries regarding provision of automatic location information and automatic number identification via a wireless phone used to contact a 911 call center.
- Taxes: Complaints/inquiries regarding taxes appearing on cellular bill
- Universal Service: Complaints/inquiries about the availability and affordability of phone service for low income consumers in geographic areas where the costs of providing telephone service is high

Billing/Rates – Recurring Charges: Disputes over recurring monthly charges that appear on a customer’s bill

Billing/Rates – Roaming Rates: Disputes about charges assessed to the subscriber for wireless calls made while roaming in another carrier’s territory

Billing/Rates – Rounding: Disputes/inquiries about the practice of rounding calls to a full minute

Billing/Rates – Service Plan Rate: Disputes/inquiries about the terms and conditions of service:

- Activation Fee: usually one time charge to initiate service
- Off-Peak: specified time where per-minute rate is lower
- Optional Services: including caller-id, voice mail, road-rescue, etc.
- Peak: specified time where per-minute rate is higher
- Prepaid Service: subscriber pays for service in advance
- Promo Plan: including minute allowances
- Security Deposit: usually one time charge that is held by the carrier for a specified timeframe in order for subscriber to acquire service

Carrier Marketing & Advertising: Disputes/inquiries regarding advertising and marketing practices of carriers including alleged misrepresentations

Contract – Early Termination: Disputes/inquiries regarding termination of a subscriber's service prior to end of specified contract term

- Termination of Service by subscriber: subscriber's liability for terminating service prior to specified contract term
- Termination of Service by carrier: carrier's right to disconnect a subscriber's service prior to end of a specified contract term

Cramming: Consumer complaints/inquiries about allegedly unauthorized, misleading, or deceptive charges appearing on a telephone bill

Equipment: Complaints/inquiries about telecommunications equipment used or purchased by a subscriber.

- Faulty Equipment: involves technical problems or malfunctioning equipment
- Stolen Equipment: involves the purported misuse of or other problems associated with stolen equipment

Service – Quality/Coverage: Disputes/inquiries regarding quality of service or the lack of coverage within a geographic area served by a wireless provider:

- Dead Spots: inability to receive service within certain areas
- Dropped Calls: premature termination of calls
- Home Area Service: overall quality of service within the subscriber's local calling area
- Network Busy Signal: involving calls that do not go through because of overcrowding of the service frequencies
- Roaming Availability: availability of service outside the subscriber's local calling area
- Roaming Service: overall quality of service while roaming
- Service Interruption: inability to use cellular phone because service was interrupted by service provider

WIRELINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Billing and Rates-Related – Includes the Following Subcategories:

Billing/Rates Credit/Refunds/Adjustments: Disputes/inquiries about credits, refunds, or adjustments allegedly owed to the subscriber

Billing/Rates – Line Item: Complaints/inquiries about the line items appearing on telephone bills:

- Access – Subscriber Line Charge: questions regarding subscriber local-loop line charges for maintaining residential and business and telephone access to the network
- Access – Universal Service: questions regarding the FCC's universal service fund-affordable access to basic telephone service for low-income consumers

and consumers in high-cost areas, and communications services for schools and libraries and health care facilities

- Interstate Directory Assistance: questions about charges assessed for access to directory assistance information
- Taxes on Telephone Bill: questions about local, state, or federal taxes appearing on a telephone bill
- Truth in Billing - No Service Provider ID: Disputes/inquiries about whether the name of the service provider and/or contact information for the service provider is easily identifiable on the bill
- Truth in Billing - Bundled Charges: Disputes/inquiries about whether bills contain plain language description and breakdown of charges for each carrier when multiple carriers appear on the bill
- Truth in Billing - No Payment Solution: Disputes/inquiries about whether a bill clearly distinguishes charges for which nonpayment will result in disconnection from those that will not result in disconnection

Billing/Rates – Rates: Miscellaneous disputes/inquiries about the rates and charges billed by telephone companies:

- Casual Call Billing: rates billed for calls placed from non-public phones through a carrier who is not the presubscribed carrier for the telephone (or which does not recognize a telephone number as that of a subscriber)
- Double Billing: dispute involving alleged double billing for calls or services
- DSL Rate Problem: DSL promotion plan rates allegedly altered or unspecified to consumer
- International Internet Dial-up: international calls (routed to places like Chad, Madagascar or other countries) that were billed to consumers as a result of using local (domestic) Internet service providers to access websites
- International Calls – Rates: international calls, rates and/or service that either originate or terminate in the U.S.
- International 809# Billing: 809 area code collect call and consumer dialing scam
- 900 Pay-Per-Call Billing: commercially provided interstate 900 number information or entertainment services
- OSP Rates: rates charged for interstate calls placed from public phones
- Rates for Interstate Telecommunications Services – Billing: disputes about interstate rates and charges

Billing/Rates – Recurring Charges: Disputed/inquiries about recurring charges that appear on a customer's bill

Carrier Marketing & Advertising: Disputes/inquiries regarding the marketing and advertising practices of interexchange carriers

Service Quality: Complaints/inquiries regarding the quality of service provided by telephone companies:

- DSL Service Inadequate: poor quality of service or service outage

- Interstate Telecommunications: poor call reception, service outage, service disconnects, or carrier's failure to release telephone line (and no charges are associated)
- Long Distance Service Treatment: inadequate customer service treatment by long distance carrier including, but not limited to, additional services being added without the consumer's knowledge or approval, etc.

Slamming – Complaints/inquiries regarding the practice of changing a subscriber's telecommunications service provider (or a calling plan) without the subscriber's permission

- International slam: changing a subscriber's international long distance service without permission
- Local Service slammed: changing a subscriber's local or regional intrastate long distance service without permission
- Local and Long Distance slammed: changing a subscriber's local and long distance service without permission
- Long Distance slammed: changing a subscriber's interstate telephone company service without permission
- Slamming w/Problem LOA: changing a subscriber's interstate telephone company based on fraudulent signed documents or illegal format, such as sweepstake.

Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA): Complaints/inquiries regarding compliance with the TCPA:

- Artificial or Prerecorded Message and/or ATDS: calls to a residence using an artificial or prerecorded voice to deliver a message without prior consent of the called party prohibited unless an emergency exists
- Do Not Call List Request Not Honored: no person or entity may initiate any telephone solicitation to a residential telephone subscriber-- unless such person or entity has instituted procedures for maintaining a list of persons who have requested not to receive telephone solicitations
- Fax Complaint: unsolicited ("junk") faxes or the use of a computer or other device to send any messages via a telephone facsimile prohibited unless such message clearly contains the date and time it is sent and an identification of the business, other entity or individual sending the message
- TCPA General Solicitations: Disputes/inquiries about the initiation of a call or message for the purpose of encouraging the purchase or rental of, or investment in property, goods, or services
- Time of Day violation: no person or entity may initiate any telephone solicitation to a residential telephone subscriber before 8 a.m. after 9 p.m. (local time based on the called party's location)

Summary of Top Consumer Inquiry* Subjects
Processed by the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB)
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002

	January	February	March	Quarter Total
Cable Services				
Over the Air Reception Device Issues	402	371	442	1,215
Programming Issues	212	147	169	528
Rates	274	184	167	625
Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act	414	379	302	1,095
Service-Related Issues	535	378	410	1,323
<i>Totals</i>	1,837	1,459	1,490	4,786
	January	February	March	Quarter Total
Radio & Television Broadcasting				
General Broadcast Information	277	237	277	791
How to Start Broadcast Station	240	217	210	667
Low Power Broadcast Information	272	259	261	792
Madalyn M. O'Hair Religious Broadcast Rumor	31	12	23	66
General Programming & Content	486	437	451	1,374
<i>Totals</i>	1,306	1,162	1,222	3,690
	January	February	March	Quarter Total
Wireless Telecommunications				
Billing & Rates	1,148	939	964	3,051
Carrier Marketing	64	48	56	168
Contract - Early Termination	193	126	125	444
Cramming	11	19	14	44
Equipment	60	48	46	154
Service Quality	137	71	91	299
<i>Totals</i>	1,613	1,251	1,296	4,160
	January	February	March	Quarter Total
Wireline Telecommunications				
Billing & Rates	2,657	3,592	3,329	9,578
Carrier Marketing & Advertising	164	156	148	468
Cramming	3,937	5,209	5,503	14,649
Service Quality	102	76	72	250
Slamming	7,671	8,832	9,463	25,966
Telephone Consumer Protection Act	1,757	1,857	2,359	5,973
<i>Totals</i>	16,288	19,722	20,874	56,884

NOTES:

* An inquiry is defined as a correspondence received at CGB's consumer centers either via letter, fax, email or telephone from individuals seeking information on matters under the FCC's jurisdiction.

Summary of Top Consumer Complaint* Subjects
Processed by the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB)
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002

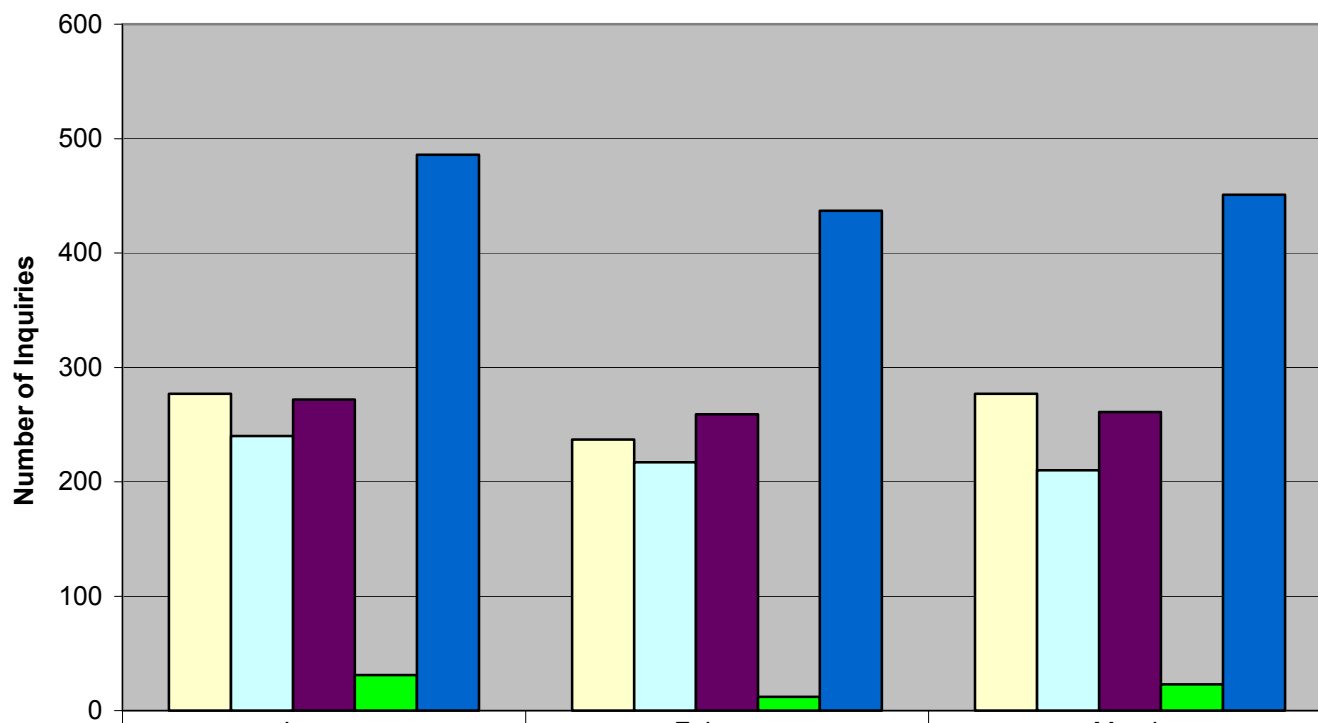
	January	February	March	Quarter Total
Cable Services				
Billing & Rates	18	18	52	88
Broadband-Related	2	3	6	11
Connections to Cable TV System	3	4	3	10
Service Quality	9	14	18	41
Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act	8	6	3	17
Totals	40	45	82	167
	January	February	March	Quarter Total
Radio & Television Broadcasting				
Programming - General Criticism	9	0	2	11
Programming - Indecency/Obscenity**	45	36	161	242
Programming - Religious	1	1	4	6
Other Programming Issues	6	1	4	11
Totals	61	38	171	270
	January	February	March	Quarter Total
Wireless Telecommunications				
Billing & Rates	455	522	873	1,850
Carrier Marketing & Advertising	128	121	137	386
Contract - Early Termination	78	93	23	194
Cramming	5	12	26	43
Equipment	39	31	73	143
Service Quality	110	109	143	362
Totals	815	888	1,275	2,978
	January	February	March	Quarter Total
Wireline Telecommunications				
Billing & Rates	927	903	1,520	3,350
Carrier Marketing & Advertising	254	238	303	795
Cramming	153	156	306	615
Service Quality	138	122	144	404
Slamming	165	204	398	767
Telephone Consumer Protection Act	296	450	527	1,273
Totals	1,933	2,073	3,198	7,204

NOTES: (1) See attachment for brief description of subject categories.

* A complaint is defined as a communication received at CGB's consumer centers either via letter, fax, email or telephone from individuals who complain about the alleged unlawful actions or omissions of an entity regulated by the FCC. The FCC receives many complaints that do not involve violations of the Communications Act or a FCC rule or order. The existence of a complaint does not necessarily indicate wrongdoing by the company involved.

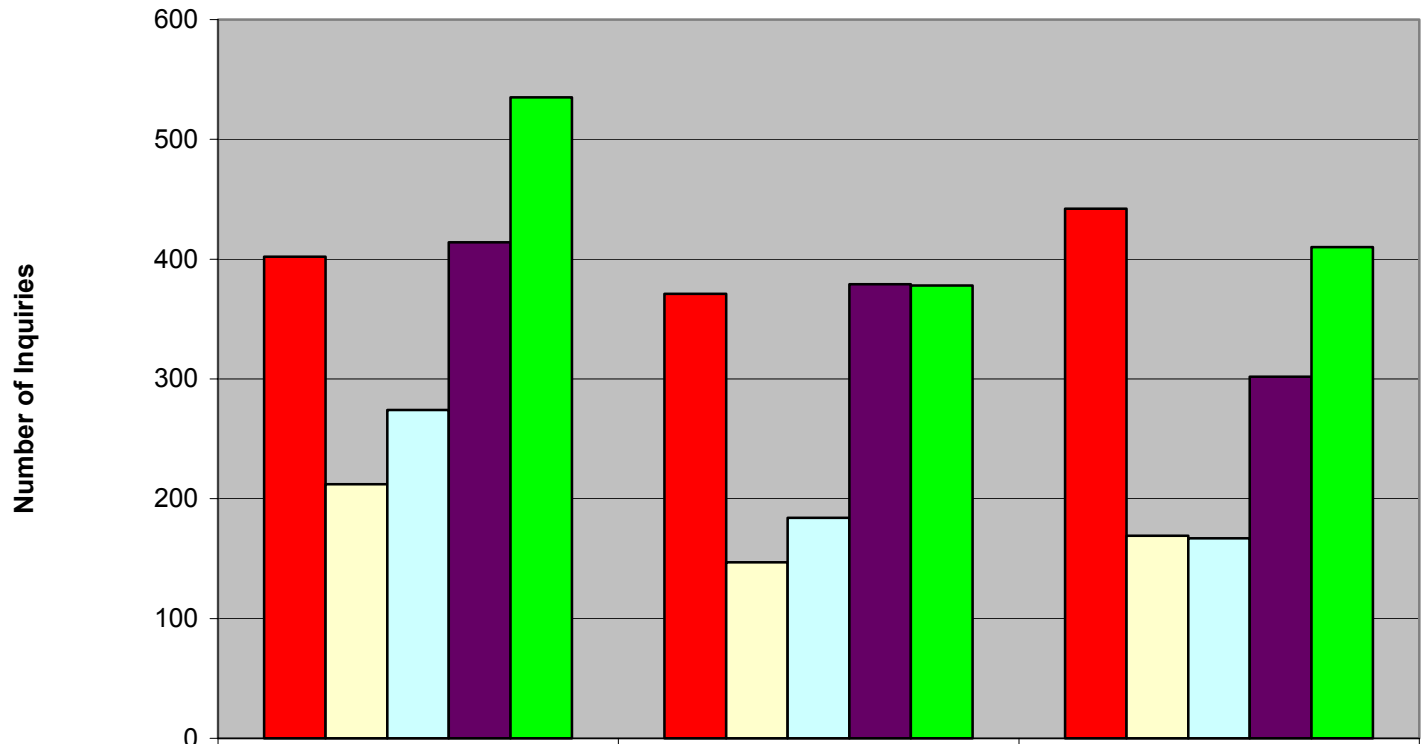
** Complaints regarding alleged indecency/obscenity during specific broadcasts are forwarded to the Enforcement Bureau for appropriate handling. The numbers reported in this category include complaints forwarded to the Enforcement Bureau as well as complaints received separately by the Enforcement Bureau. Of the 242 complaints, 233 were referred to or received by the Enforcement Bureau.

**Consumer Information Bureau
Top Radio & Television Broadcasting Inquiries
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002**



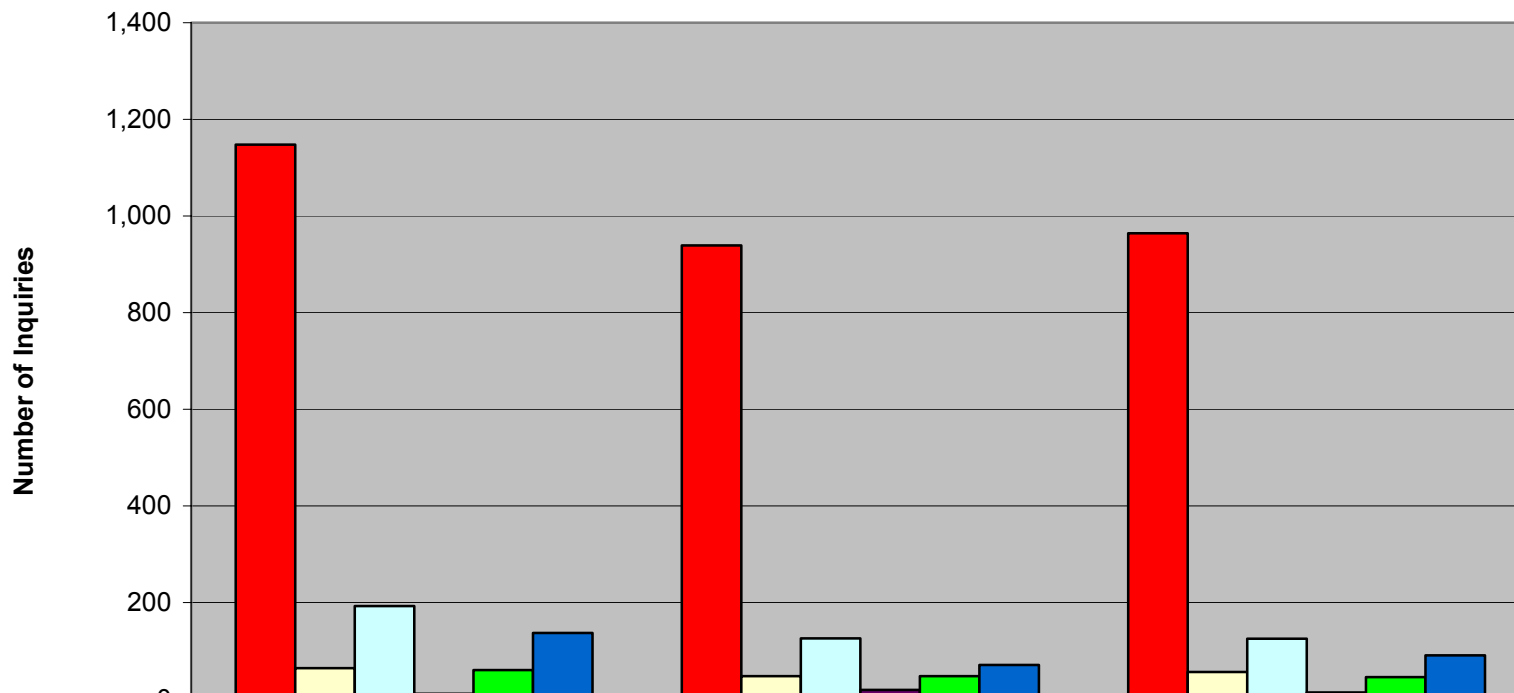
	January	February	March
General Broadcast Information	277	237	277
How to Start Broadcast Station	240	217	210
Low Power Broadcast Information	272	259	261
Madalyn M. O'Hair Religious Broadcast Rumor	31	12	23
General Programming & Content	486	437	451

**Consumer Information Bureau
Top Cable Service Consumer Inquiries
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002**



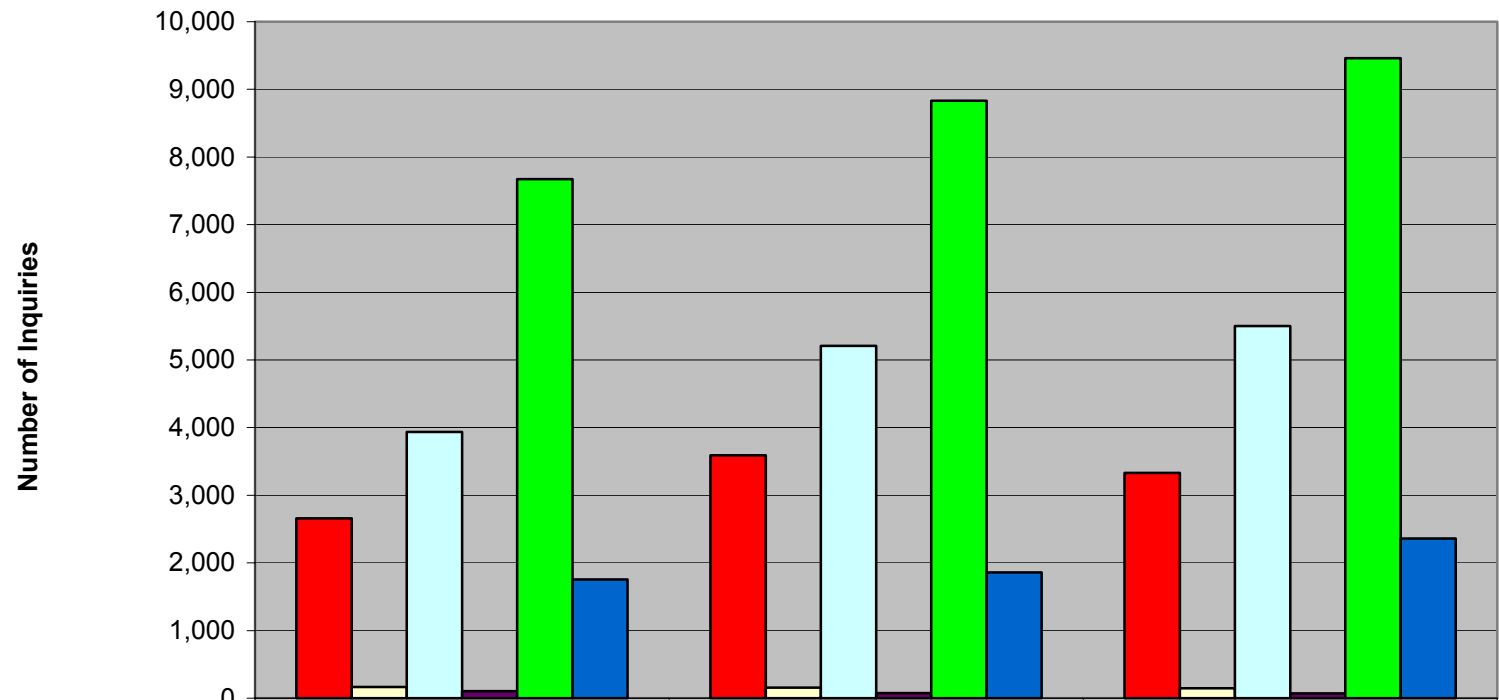
	January	February	March
Over the Air Reception Device Issues	402	371	442
Programming Issues	212	147	169
Rates	274	184	167
Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act	414	379	302
Service-Related Issues	535	378	410

**Consumer Information Bureau
Top Wireless Telecommunications Consumer Inquiries
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002**



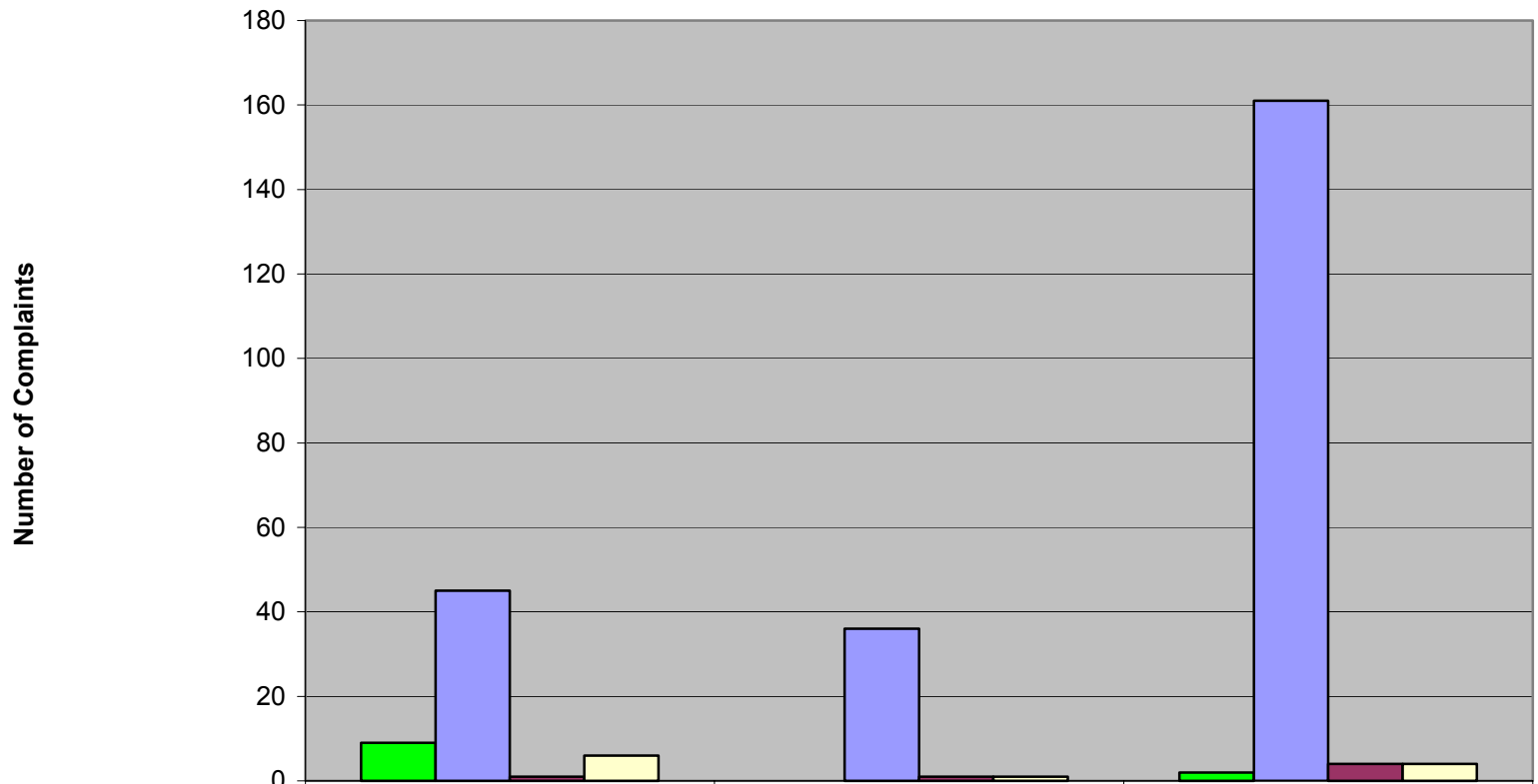
	January	February	March
■ Billing & Rates	1,148	939	964
■ Carrier Marketing	64	48	56
■ Contract - Early Termination	193	126	125
■ Cramming	11	19	14
■ Equipment	60	48	46
■ Service Quality	137	71	91

**Consumer Information Bureau
Top Wireline Telecommunications Consumer Inquiries
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002**



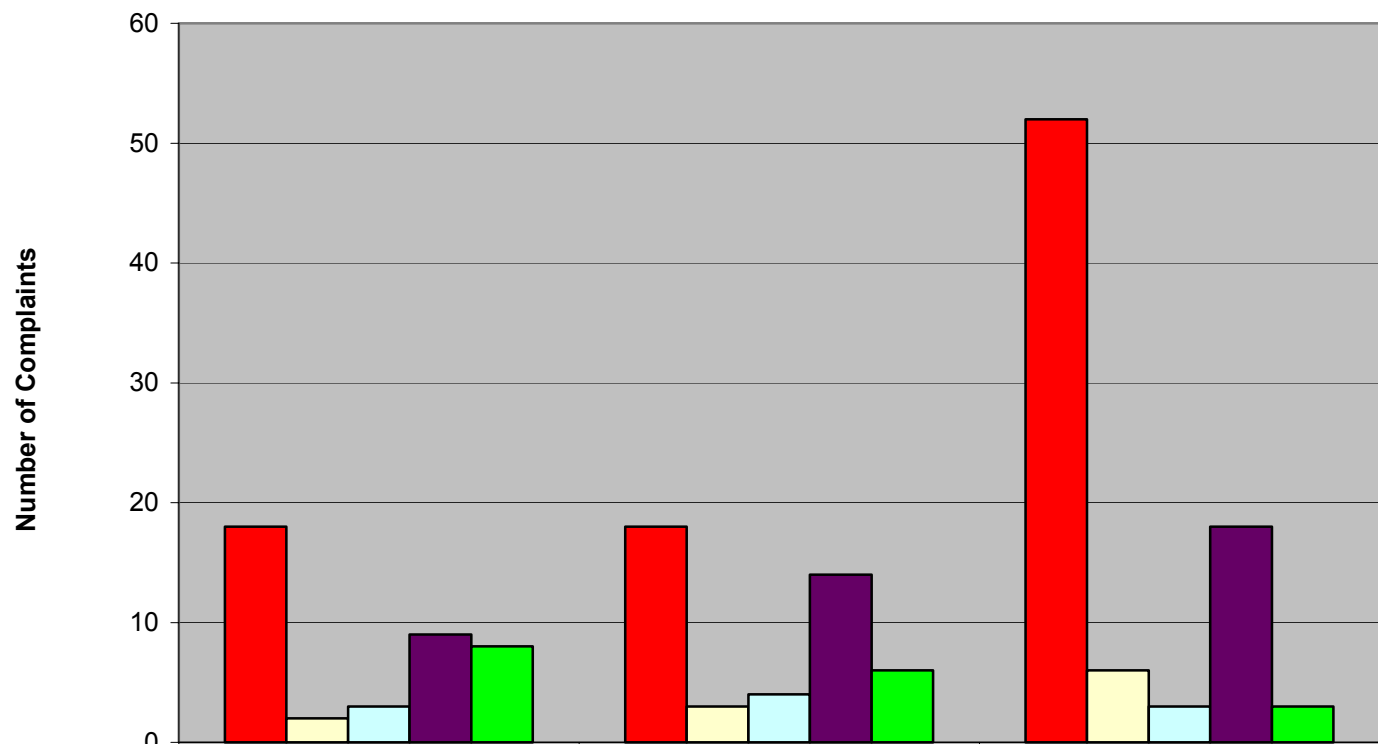
	January	February	March
■ Billing & Rates	2,657	3,592	3,329
■ Carrier Marketing & Advertising	164	156	148
■ Cramming	3,937	5,209	5,503
■ Service Quality	102	76	72
■ Slamming	7,671	8,832	9,463
■ Telephone Consumer Protection Act	1,757	1,857	2,359

**Consumer Information Bureau
Top Radio & Television Broadcasting Consumer Complaints
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002**



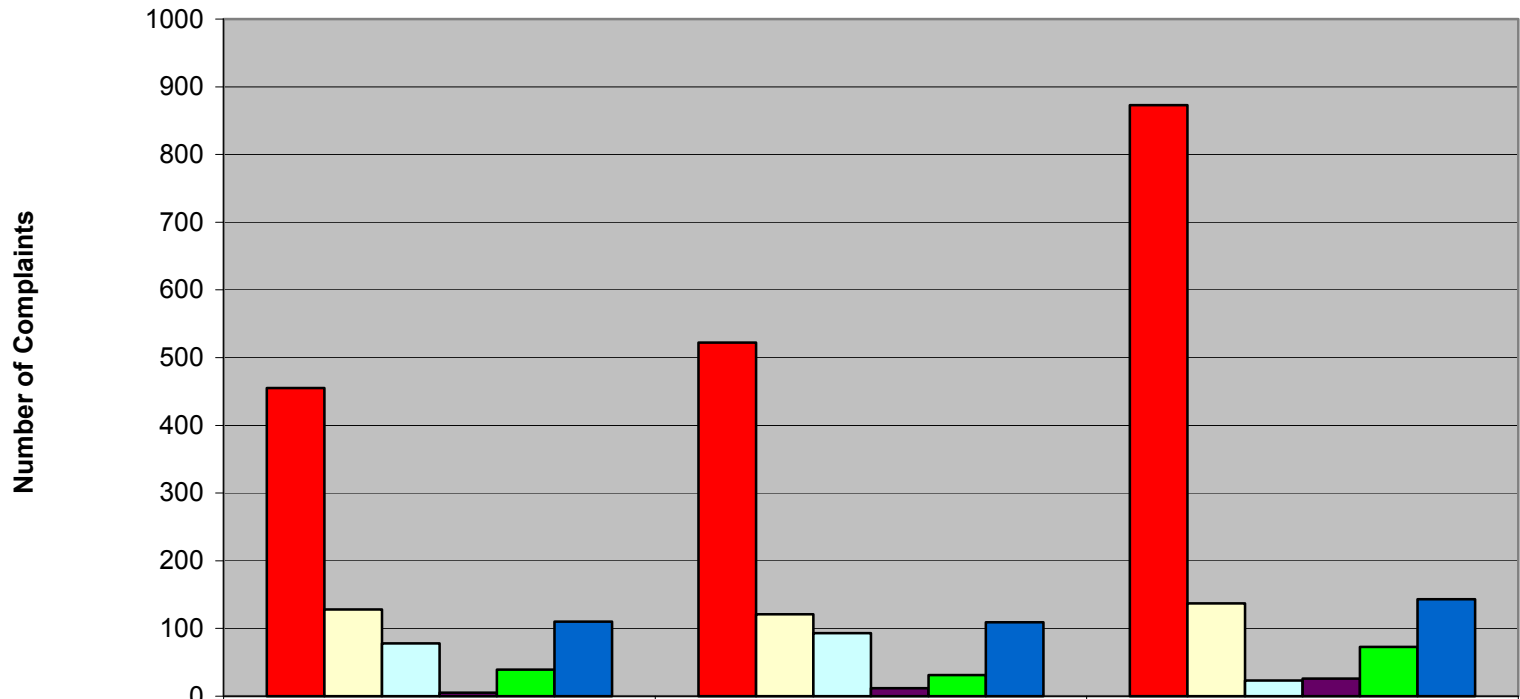
	January	February	March
■ Programming - General Criticism	9	0	2
■ Programming -Indecency/Obscenity**	45	36	161
■ Programming - Religious	1	1	4
■ Other Programming Issues	6	1	4

**Consumer Information Bureau
Top Cable Service Consumer Complaints
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002**



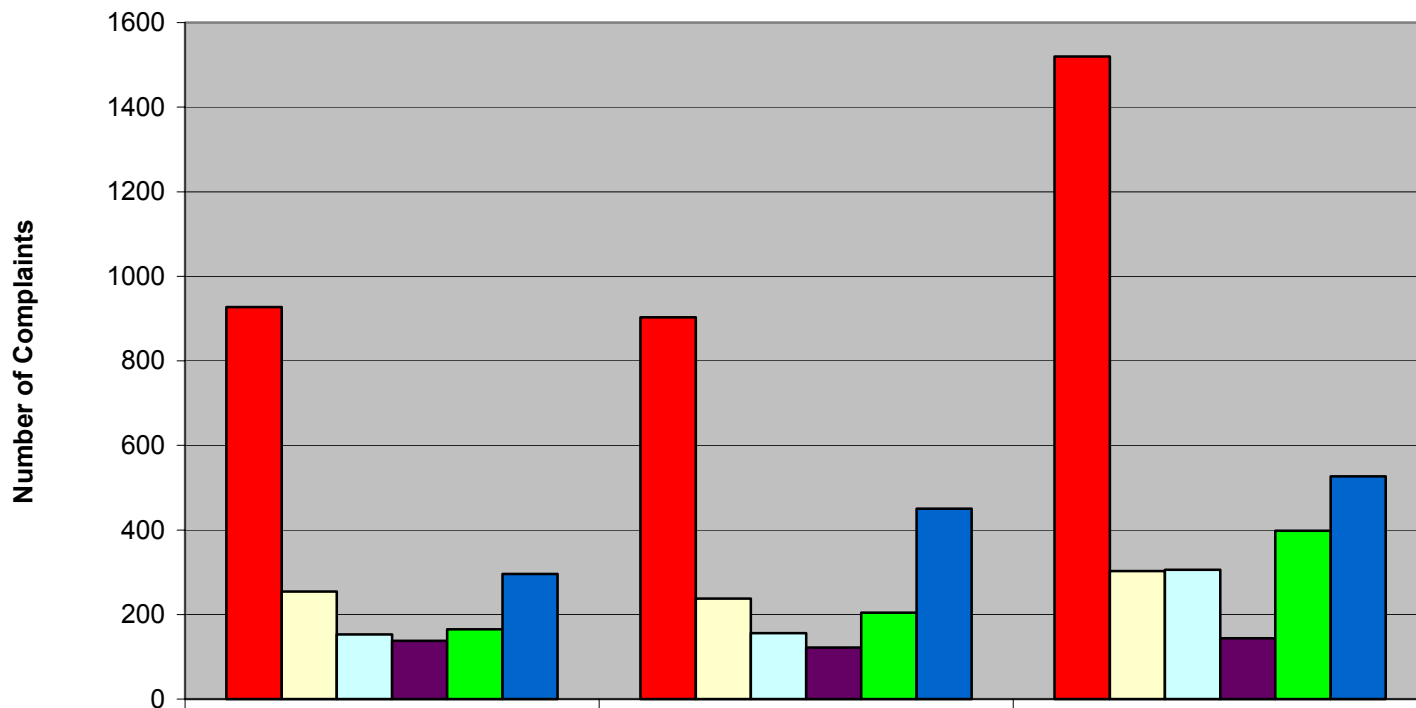
	January	February	March
■ Billing & Rates	18	18	52
■ Broadband-Related	2	3	6
■ Connections to Cable TV System	3	4	3
■ Service Quality	9	14	18
■ Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act	8	6	3

**Consumer Information Bureau
Top Wireless Telecommunications Consumer Complaints
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002**



	January	February	March
■ Billing & Rates	455	522	873
■ Carrier Marketing & Advertising	128	121	137
■ Contract - Early Termination	78	93	23
■ Cramming	5	12	26
■ Equipment	39	31	73
■ Service Quality	110	109	143

**Consumer Information Bureau
Top Wireline Telecommunications Consumer Complaints
First Quarter - Calendar Year 2002**



	January	February	March
■ Billing & Rates	927	903	1,520
■ Carrier Marketing & Advertising	254	238	303
■ Cramming	153	156	306
■ Service Quality	138	122	144
■ Slamming	165	204	398
■ Telephone Consumer Protection Act	296	450	527