

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

**Qwest Corporation
Designated Eligible Carrier – Partial Relinquish
Application**

Case No. PU-25-233

ORDER ON ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER DESIGNATION

February 18, 2026

Discussion

On August 1, 2025, Qwest Corporation (Qwest) filed an application with the Commission under 47 U.S.C, section 214(e)(4) and 47 C.F.R. section 54.205, requesting relinquishment of its designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) in the area currently known as the Leonard Exchange. Qwest was designated as an ETC for the purpose of receiving federal universal service support in North Dakota by the Commission on December 17, 1997, under the name of U S West Communications, Inc., which was subsequently merged with Qwest.

On August 7, 2025, the Commission issued a Notice of Opportunity for Comment providing until close of business on October 10, 2025, to receive comments.

On September 30, 2025, Griggs County Telephone Company (Griggs) filed comments.

On October 10, 2025, Halstad Telephone Company, Qwest Corporation, BEK Communications Cooperative, Dakota Central Telecommunications Cooperative, Polar Communications Mutual Aid Corporation, Consolidated Telcom, Red River Rural Telephone Association, and the Broadband Association of North Dakota filed comments.

Also on October 10, 2025, Griggs filed a request for intervention in the proceeding and a request for hearing.

Under 47 U.S.C. section 214(e)(4) and 47 C.F.R. section 54.205, the Commission shall permit a carrier to relinquish its ETC designation for an area served by more than one eligible telecommunications carrier. Prior to permitting a telecommunications carrier designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier to cease providing universal service in an area served by more than one eligible telecommunications carrier, the state commission shall require the remaining eligible telecommunications carrier or carriers to ensure that all customers served by the relinquishing carrier will continue to be served, and shall require sufficient notice to permit the purchase or construction of adequate facilities by any remaining eligible telecommunications carrier. The state commission shall

establish a time, not to exceed one year after the state commission approves such relinquishment under this section, within which such purchase or construction shall be completed.

Griggs' comments, request for intervention, and request for a hearing does not oppose Qwest's requested relinquishment of its ETC designation, but rather seeks to litigate issues related to Qwest's Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN).

Halstad Telephone Company, BEK Communications Cooperative, Dakota Central Telecommunications Cooperative, Polar Communications Mutual Aid Corporation, Consolidated Telcom, Red River Rural Telephone Association, and the Broadband Association of North Dakota comments support Griggs' assertions and purport additional issues related to Qwest's CPCN.

The Commission has reviewed the documents in this proceeding and finds:

1. There is more than one ETC serving in the Leonard Exchange. The alternative ETC's include Griggs and multiple wireless carriers.
2. Qwest provided advanced notice to the Commission of its intent to relinquish its ETC designation for the Leonard Exchange.
3. There are 17 voice subscribers currently being served by Qwest in the Leonard Exchange. Those subscribers have the option to port their service to Griggs or a wireless service, purchase connected voice service with air-line from Qwest or disconnect service. Qwest has provided multiple notices to each subscriber including a face to face discussion.

The Commission finds the basis for Griggs' request to intervene and request for formal hearing are focused on questions related to Qwest's qualification to retain its CPCN. Regardless of Griggs' assertions, as well as the assertions of others, the Commission finds Qwest's CPCN is not within the issues of this proceeding, and that granting intervention and a hearing on that basis would both unduly broaden the issues and delay this proceeding.

Order

The Commission Orders:

1. Griggs County Telephone Company's request for intervention is denied.
2. Griggs County Telephone Company's request for a formal hearing is denied.

3. Qwest Corporation's relinquishment of its December 17, 1997, designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier is permitted for the Leonard Exchange in North Dakota effective February 18, 2026.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

		
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Sheri Haugen-Hoffart Commissioner	Randy Christmann Chair	Jill Kringstad Commissioner