

Docket No. UT-170042 - Vol. III

In the Matter of CenturyLink

April 3, 2019



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Page 105

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Notice of)
Transaction and Application of,) Docket No. UT-170042

CENTURYLINK)

For an Order Declining to Assert)
Jurisdiction Over, or in the)
Alternative, Expedited Approval)
of the Indirect Transfer of)
Control of Level 3)
Communications, LLC, Broadwing)
Communications, LLC, Witel)
Communications, LLC, Global)
Crossing Telecommunications,)
Inc., and Level 3 Telecom of)
Washington, LLC to CenturyLink,)
Inc.)

HEARING, VOLUME III
Pages 105-136
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE GREGORY J. KOPTA

April 3, 2019
9:30 a.m.

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 South Evergreen Park Drive Southwest
Olympia, Washington 98504

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Page 106

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Page 107

1 A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont.)
2 ALSO PRESENT:
3 SUSIE PAUL
4 Commission Investigator

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Page 108

1 OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON; APRIL 3, 2019
2 9:30 A.M.
3 --o0o--
4 P R O C E E D I N G S

5
6 JUDGE KOPTA: Then let's be on the record in
7 Docket UT-132234, captioned Washington Utilities and
8 Transportation Commission versus CenturyTel of Inter
9 Island, Inc, d/b/a CenturyLink, Docket UT-140597, which
10 is captioned Washington Utilities and Transportation
11 Commission versus Qwest Corporation, d/b/a CenturyLink
12 QC, and Docket UT-170042, captioned In the Matter of the
13 Notice of Transaction and Application of CenturyLink for
14 an -- well, for a whole bunch of stuff involving level
15 3.

16 MS. BROWN: That works.
17 JUDGE KOPTA: I'm Gregory J. Kopta, the
18 administrative law judge who is presiding, and we are
19 here to discuss competing motions having to do with
20 access to confidential information provided in those
21 dockets, or at least two out of three of those dockets.
22 Let's start by taking appearances beginning
23 with the Company.
24 MS. ANDERL: Good morning, Your Honor. Lisa
25 Anderl, in-house attorney representing CenturyLink. And

Page 109

1 I've provided my full contact information on my business
 2 card to the court reporter.
 3 JUDGE KOPTA: All right. Thank you.
 4 And for Staff?
 5 MS. BROWN: Sally Brown, Senior Assistant
 6 Attorney General, appearing on behalf of Commission
 7 Staff.
 8 MR. FUKANO: Harry Fukano, Assistant
 9 Attorney General, appearing on behalf of Commission
 10 Staff.
 11 JUDGE KOPTA: And anyone on the bridge line
 12 wishing to make an appearance?
 13 MS. GAFKEN: Yes, this is Lisa Gafken,
 14 Assistant Attorney General, appearing on behalf of
 15 Public Counsel.
 16 JUDGE KOPTA: Anyone else? Hearing nothing,
 17 we will proceed.
 18 All right. First I wanted to clarify, as I
 19 understand it, we are now only talking about Dockets
 20 UT-140597 and UT-170042; is that correct? I'm seeing
 21 head nods.
 22 Is that your understanding, Ms. Anderl?
 23 MS. ANDERL: I've been advised by Staff that
 24 they are no longer seeking information in the 1-3
 25 docket.

Page 110

1 JUDGE KOPTA: Okay. Then at least we've
 2 narrowed the scope a little bit.
 3 Also, I have read the pleadings and it
 4 appears that there is not a dispute as to what
 5 CenturyLink has provided in its motion, which is that
 6 what Staff is requesting is outside the bounds of the
 7 protective orders that were issued in those two dockets;
 8 is that correct? Is Staff contesting whether that is an
 9 issue?
 10 MR. FUKANO: No, we would I think both agree
 11 as to that point.
 12 JUDGE KOPTA: All right. So then really
 13 what it boils down to it seems to me is Staff wants its
 14 expert witness to be able to review certain confidential
 15 information that was provided in those dockets and has
 16 proposed a couple of ways of doing that. And also,
 17 yesterday, I have received and have all the parties
 18 received a list from Staff of the documents that it
 19 seeks at this point for its experts to review in
 20 conjunction with the investigation that Staff is
 21 undertaking of a recent 911 outage involving the
 22 company; is that correct, Mr. Fukano?
 23 MR. FUKANO: That is correct.
 24 JUDGE KOPTA: Um...
 25 MS. ANDERL: Your Honor, if I can just

Page 111

1 clarify. It's not established on the record that
 2 CenturyLink provision of 911 was impaired or
 3 interrupted.
 4 JUDGE KOPTA: I was not intending to say one
 5 way or the other. I was simply referencing that that's
 6 the subject matter of the investigation.
 7 MS. ANDERL: I just want to be really
 8 careful.
 9 JUDGE KOPTA: Understood, and I accept and
 10 appreciate that clarification. Ms. Anderl, do you --
 11 have you had a chance to consult with your client about
 12 the list of documents that Staff wants to have its
 13 expert be able to review?
 14 MS. ANDERL: Not -- not really. We -- we
 15 got it at 3:30 yesterday afternoon, and I had no time to
 16 reach out to anybody. Most people are in time zones to
 17 the East. But I'm very familiar with all of the
 18 documents and very familiar with and -- and -- and
 19 comfortable with the position that the Company would
 20 take on those documents.
 21 JUDGE KOPTA: All right. And as I
 22 understand it from Staff's pleading, there is a
 23 nondisclosure agreement in place between the Company and
 24 Staff; is that true?
 25 MS. ANDERL: No, there is a nondisclosure

Page 112

1 agreement in place between the Staff and its expert.
 2 JUDGE KOPTA: I see. So there is nothing
 3 between the Company and Staff?
 4 MS. ANDERL: Not other than the protective
 5 orders in these closed dockets, that's right. No,
 6 there's no protective order in the hidden docket,
 7 181051.
 8 JUDGE KOPTA: Have there been any
 9 discussions between the Company and Staff about entering
 10 into such an agreement?
 11 MS. ANDERL: I offered -- before filing my
 12 motion to enforce the protective agreement, I offered to
 13 work through documents on a document-by-document basis,
 14 but until I got this yesterday, I had not received a
 15 response to that offer.
 16 JUDGE KOPTA: Okay. And from Staff's
 17 perspective -- well, I'm not going to ask that you
 18 negotiate with the Company as we're sitting here this
 19 morning. That doesn't make sense.
 20 MS. ANDERL: Well, Your Honor, I'm -- I'm
 21 kind of happy to cut to the chase on some of this if you
 22 would like?
 23 JUDGE KOPTA: I -- I would like, because
 24 I'm -- I'm not really comfortable with any of the
 25 options that are before me right now so...

Page 113

1 MS. ANDERL: Okay. So here you go. I had
 2 my whole long argument prepared, and I won't give it
 3 unless you want it, but needless to say, in both of
 4 these dockets there were countless -- well, not
 5 countless, because we can count them, but confidential
 6 documents filed, many of which were made a part of the
 7 Commission's record. Many more of which were provided
 8 in discovery and not made a part of the record, but
 9 which would be available to the expert if the protective
 10 order will modify per Staff's request.
 11 And many of those, particularly in the
 12 merger docket, have absolutely no bearing on even the
 13 provision of telecommunication service much less the
 14 provision of 911. There's information in there about
 15 our pro forma adjusted revenue, EBITDA, Capex, debt
 16 levels, free cash flow, their access line counts,
 17 there's broadband penetration numbers.
 18 That is all very sensitive business
 19 information. It is inconceivable to me that Staff's
 20 expert would have a need to see any of that. And, in
 21 fact, none of that information is on the document that
 22 Mr. Fukano just provided. So that's good.
 23 Nevertheless, as I said, modifying the protective order
 24 in the way that Staff requests would -- would not
 25 protect against disclosure of that.

Page 114

1 I do not understand why Staff wants its
 2 expert to see the compliance reports or the diversity
 3 audits filed in Docket 140597. I do not understand the
 4 relevance of any of the NORS outage reports.
 5 I do, however, agree that the root cause
 6 analysis, the last document on the list filed on or
 7 about February 12th, 2019, regarding the December 27th
 8 and 28th network event is something that if they are
 9 conducting an investigation into that network event,
 10 their expert should see.
 11 It was filed, you know, basically for
 12 convenience in the merger docket, because there was no
 13 place else to put it. If, you know, Docket 181051 were
 14 a novel informal public docket, you could issue a
 15 protective order in that, maybe you still can do that.
 16 And we would be happy to file that root cause analysis
 17 in that docket thereby allowing Staff's expert access to
 18 that.
 19 The other two documents that are at issue
 20 are the confidential version of the settlement agreement
 21 in the merger docket. I'm -- I didn't have time to
 22 review that, but in my recollection is that, the
 23 confidential information did not have any bearing on 911
 24 or the military department. And so I don't know why
 25 we'd need a confidential version of the settlement

Page 115

1 agreement with attachments to be provided to the expert.
 2 And with regard the Washington State
 3 Military Department, amendment M, that is confidential.
 4 It's a provision between the Company and Military. I
 5 think Military asked for it to be confidential. With
 6 Military's consent, we would obviously refile it in the
 7 181051 docket if a -- if a protective order were issued
 8 there, and we wouldn't object to that.
 9 So boils down to Staff is proposing 30
 10 documents with a caveat that the list is potentiality
 11 subject to change. We would agree to two of them.
 12 JUDGE KOPTA: Okay. And from your
 13 perspective, you would want a protective order to be
 14 able to do that as opposed to a nondisclosure agreement
 15 between you and Staff, for example?
 16 MS. ANDERL: That's right. I think a
 17 protective order is -- I'm not sure a nondisclosure
 18 agreement, a public entity can even enter into that and
 19 have it be enforceable. If somebody were to submit a
 20 request for public records, I think a protective order
 21 gives us more protection.
 22 JUDGE KOPTA: All right. Let's hear from
 23 Staff. What's -- you've heard from what the Company
 24 has -- has said. I'm loath to get into a back and forth
 25 in terms of how necessary these documents are since

Page 116

1 there are at least two that the Company has agreed are
 2 appropriate to provide to your expert and relay the
 3 issue. Before me at the moment is whether and under
 4 what circumstances the Commission can do something to
 5 allow that I guess is the easiest way to say it. But
 6 I'll let you respond, Mr. Fukano.
 7 MR. FUKANO: Well, I believe that the
 8 Commission has two possible methods of doing that, as
 9 I've detailed in my motion. And I think the -- the
 10 protective orders in Dockets UT-170042 and UT-140597
 11 form the basis for CenturyLink's objection in this
 12 matter. And those both -- orders both state absent a
 13 protective order, a significant risk exists that
 14 confidential information might become available to
 15 persons who have no legitimate need for that information
 16 and that in -- that injuries to the information
 17 provider may result.
 18 The language of the protective order suggest
 19 that the limitation on access to confidential
 20 information serves two purposes; first, that it will
 21 prevent access to persons who have no legitimate need
 22 for that information; and second and relatedly, to
 23 prevent such persons from disclosing that sensitive
 24 information thereby causing injury to the provider.
 25 Staff would argue that Mr. Roach does have a

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 117</p> <p>1 legitimate need to review that information filed in 2 docket -- in this docket and that sufficient safeguards 3 have been and will be put in place to preserve the 4 confidentiality of that information. 5 So it's further detailed in the pending 6 stage of the motion, the Commission has hired Mr. Glenn 7 Roach to act as a consultant for the purpose of Docket 8 UT-181051, and as part of this arrangement, Mr. Roach 9 will be responsible for preparing a report related to 10 the December 2019 991 service outage, assisting Staff 11 with discovery requests and preparing testimony in 12 addition to other matters. Given that Mr. Roach will 13 participate extensively in the investigation and 14 potential hearing in Docket UT-181051, Staff would 15 maintain that Mr. Roach does have a legitimate need to 16 review the information. 17 Secondly, Staff would contend that there are 18 sufficient safeguards to preserve confidentiality of 19 CenturyLink information for three reasons; first, as 20 discussed earlier, Staff has entered into a 21 nondisclosure agreement with Mr. Roach, the terms of 22 which are detailed in Appendix B, which prohibit 23 Mr. Roach from disclosing any of the information that 24 Staff provides him. 25 Second, Staff would anticipate and support</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 119</p> <p>1 already requested. 2 And third, as a general matter, Staff would 3 prefer to review the information that it already 4 possesses rather than requesting that information, 5 because the Company -- rather than asking the Company 6 for -- for a State company for documents because the 7 request to the Company presents the Company an 8 opportunity to essentially characterize or influence 9 Staff's review of those documents. That is, a company 10 is given additional opportunity to lobby Staff about the 11 content of those documents. And this is not, to 12 clarify, a reflection on CenturyLink but just a general 13 investigative concern that Staff has presented. 14 And so in summary, it doesn't appear as 15 though it is an issue as to whether Mr. Roach could 16 access the confidential information, but it appears to 17 be how Mr. Roach will access that confidential 18 information. Staff would assert that the Commission 19 should modify the protective order in Docket 14 and 17 20 to permit Mr. Roach to review the confidential 21 information as Mr. Roach has a legitimate need to access 22 the information, and Commission safeguards will be put 23 in place to maintain confidentiality of CenturyLink's 24 information. In the alternative, we would request a 25 subpoena under the statutory authority as listed in my</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 118</p> <p>1 the Commission issuing an additional protective order in 2 Docket 181 as we've been discussing to provide 3 additional confidentiality protection on the same terms 4 of similar terms as those already entered into Docket 5 UT-17 and UT-14. 6 And third, Staff would like to clarify that 7 the independent consultant would not have any unfettered 8 access to rummage through the Commission SharePoint 9 internal system. Rather, Staff would not intend to 10 allow the independent consultant to go on a fishing 11 expedition through the materials that it would be -- he 12 would be able to access anything he wanted. That 13 material would have to come through Staff and be 14 provided to the independent consultant. 15 And while Staff would be amenable to either 16 alternative suggested in its motion, it would prefer to 17 modify the protective order, and we would prefer that 18 for three reasons. The first would be that it would 19 avoid duplicative, accumulative refileing of the same 20 information. 21 The second would be that modification of the 22 protective order would permit Staff to add- --- to 23 provide the consultant with additional confidential 24 information if that information was determined to be 25 relevant after reviewing the information that Staff has</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 120</p> <p>1 motion. 2 MS. ANDERL: Your Honor, if I may respond? 3 JUDGE KOPTA: In just a moment. 4 I have a couple of concerns. One is, the 5 protective order in both of those dockets requires 6 confidential information to be returned to the person 7 who provided it except for counsel records, which are 8 exhibits, and the Commission will have whatever is on 9 file. So theoretically, and I won't ask whether this is 10 in true practice, it's not possible to rummage through 11 files for discovery, because all of that information 12 should have been destroyed or returned. 13 The more pressing issues are, Staff is 14 asking me to do something the Commission has never done 15 before, and that is to modify a protective order to 16 allow someone who is not involved in the actual dockets 17 to review confidential information, or alternatively, to 18 enter a protective order in a docket that is not yet an 19 adjudication, which the Commission has consistently 20 declined to do in other circumstances, for example, in 21 Integrated Resource Plan dockets. 22 So I'm a little bit uncomfortable going that 23 step. I understand your arguments, Mr. Fukano, and I 24 understand Staff's desire for its expert to be able to 25 review this information. I'm just not comfortable at</p>

Page 121

1 this point how the Commission can best accommodate that.
 2 And with those reservations, Ms. Anderl,
 3 would you like to respond to what Mr. Fukano said?
 4 MS. ANDERL: Yes, Your Honor. I've been
 5 trying to keep my -- level-headed about this, but, you
 6 know, frankly, I am outraged by Staff's behavior so far.
 7 I mean, we have I think already multiple violations of
 8 this protec- -- these protective orders, which very
 9 clearly in paragraph 7 state that no confidential
 10 information distributed or obtained in this protec- --
 11 under this protective order may be requested and
 12 reviewed, used or disclosed by any party or counsel
 13 except for purposes of this proceeding.
 14 To the extent that we are already this far
 15 along, that all of these outage reports have been
 16 identified, I have to assume that Staff attorneys
 17 reviewed them. These -- the two attorneys who sit
 18 before you today, one of them I have no record of having
 19 received an attorney Exhibit A in the docket. The
 20 other, Ms. Brown, filed an attorney Exhibit A in January
 21 of this year.
 22 So it is clear that the -- but there's no,
 23 of course, ability for us to object to the attorney
 24 exhibits, only the expert exhibits. But the dockets
 25 long closed have now been already opened by Staff and

Page 122

1 information has been analyzed for purposes not of that
 2 docket, but for purposes of a new investigation.
 3 I find this to be outrageous and really
 4 disconcerting. Staff's recommendation that you now
 5 retroactively modify the protective order to somehow
 6 sanction what they did is something that would be, I
 7 think, horrible precedent. It would have an extremely
 8 chilling effect on any company's ability or willingness
 9 to disclose confidential information in a proceeding
 10 with any degree of confidence that it would be properly
 11 protected.
 12 I think that you should deny Staff's motion
 13 to modify the protective order, you should deny Staff's
 14 motion for an investigative subpoena, and I'm -- as I
 15 said, I am, in spite of being angry about this, willing
 16 to work with Staff on those two documents that I believe
 17 are incontrovertibly relevant to the investigation.
 18 Fine, let's figure out how to protect them, but beyond
 19 that, I do not believe that -- I do not believe that
 20 Staff should be given any of the relief that it asks
 21 for.
 22 JUDGE KOPTA: All right.
 23 MR. FUKANO: I have a brief response.
 24 JUDGE KOPTA: Yes, you may.
 25 MR. FUKANO: I'd like to clarify for the

Page 123

1 record that although I included the NORS report and
 2 other information to the request for Staff, I viewed
 3 those through the SharePoint internal system and did not
 4 view the content of those documents. And so I do not
 5 know necessarily what those documents contain because I
 6 have not signed a required confidentiality measures, but
 7 I had those identified by Staff as being potentially
 8 responsive to their investigation.
 9 And I'd like to further add that Staff does,
 10 under RCW 80.04.070, have the right to inspect the books
 11 of any public service company, which would include
 12 CenturyLink in this case. My request for a protective
 13 order in that matter would be to help preserve any
 14 confidentiality and add additional protection on top of
 15 that. But I do believe that Staff would have the right
 16 to access that information.
 17 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, and that's true. And
 18 obviously, RCW 80.04.095 specifically grants the
 19 Commission the ability to review, to receive
 20 confidential information, which implicitly means that
 21 Staff can review that information. And there's always
 22 been a bit of a debate about the necessity for Staff to
 23 file the -- submit signature pages to the protective
 24 orders since they already have the right to look at that
 25 information. But that's a matter for a debate at

Page 124

1 another day at another time.
 2 I'm going to ask a practical question of
 3 Staff and that's, if you don't get this information,
 4 what happens? I mean, Staff can look at it, but the
 5 expert can't. And so I know that much, but what --
 6 how -- how is that going to or will it impair Staff's
 7 investigation not to have the expert, your expert,
 8 review this information?
 9 MS. PAUL: Yes, as an investigator, that's
 10 what I do and I investigate; however, I don't have the
 11 technical expertise that we have contracted and the
 12 assistance is necessary for us to have for me to be able
 13 to do a thorough investigation and understand all the
 14 issues.
 15 JUDGE KOPTA: And --
 16 MS. BROWN: May I add something, Your Honor?
 17 JUDGE KOPTA: Yes, you may.
 18 MS. BROWN: That is a gross understatement.
 19 If -- if the Commission Staff's expert witness is denied
 20 access to exhibits that were filed in previous dockets
 21 that are now closed, that will have a very negative
 22 effect on Commission Staff's investigation of the
 23 CenturyLink 911 outage.
 24 JUDGE KOPTA: If you were conducting this
 25 investigation in the absence of these other dockets, are

Page 125

1 these the sorts of documents that you would be asking
 2 for as part of your investigation?
 3 MS. PAUL: Yes.
 4 JUDGE KOPTA: When you investigated the
 5 previous incident involving 911, were these documents
 6 that you -- same type of documents that you requested
 7 from the Company?
 8 MS. PAUL: I believe so, yes, but that was
 9 from regulatory services. But yes, we did request those
 10 documents.
 11 MS. ANDERL: Your Honor, I -- I would
 12 absolutely object. These NORS reports only started
 13 being filed in the 170 docket. They were never provided
 14 to Commission Staff on -- to my recollection in the 2014
 15 911 outage. The circuit diversity audit and the FCC
 16 compliance reports that were filed in the 911 docket
 17 were filed after that docket was closed as part of the
 18 settlement agreement. So these documents I do not
 19 believe are similar to what was requested in prior
 20 investigations.
 21 MS. BROWN: That's -- that's -- Your Honor,
 22 that's wholly irrelevant. These are called outage
 23 reports. Central to this whole investigation in the
 24 CenturyLink 911 outage. I know Ms. Anderl went on at
 25 length about that these documents are in her -- in her

Page 126

1 view are irrelevant to Staff's investigation and perhaps
 2 not -- would not be likely to lead to the discovery of
 3 admissible evidence. That's not what we're here to
 4 discuss this morning.
 5 The issue is whether or not Commission
 6 Staff's expert, hired expert, is able to have access --
 7 well, no, let me rephrase that.
 8 The question is not whether or not this
 9 particular -- Mr. Glenn Roach, the Commission Staff's
 10 expert, will have access to these records. That's a
 11 given. That will happen. The question is -- is how,
 12 the means by which that will occur.
 13 JUDGE KOPTA: And when.
 14 MS. BROWN: Well, and when, sure. So I
 15 mean, if we wait until this is no longer a hidden
 16 docket, Commission Staff can propound data requests on
 17 CenturyLink for every single one of these dockets -- on
 18 every single one of these documents, not just two that
 19 the Company is going to deign to -- to allow that
 20 Commission Staff may share with its expert.
 21 So it may -- it will elongate the
 22 proceeding, but I personally have no heartburn about
 23 that, because the Federal Government is also
 24 investigating this outage. So it's a que- -- it's a
 25 question of -- of when, but not -- not if. And if the

Page 127

1 Commission chooses to hamper Commission Staff's
 2 investigation that -- talk about horrible precedent and
 3 having a chilling effect. That would be the ultimate
 4 outcome.
 5 And it seems to me that there are -- there
 6 are methods, the protective orders by their own terms
 7 include a provision for modification of the existing
 8 protective orders. And let's not overlook the
 9 administrative law permits investigative subpoenas. So
 10 that's -- that's another path to victory here. I -- I
 11 can see this is somewhat problematic because we haven't
 12 had a prehearing conference in UT-181051, but we're not
 13 there yet.
 14 JUDGE KOPTA: I know, and -- and that's what
 15 I'm wrestling with is, I -- I take your point, that it
 16 is a practical issue of when, not if, and yet at the
 17 same time, doing what Staff has requested would be
 18 something different than the Commission has done before,
 19 and I have to keep in mind how that will play out in the
 20 future if -- if we do what you've asked.
 21 Let's go off the record for a moment.
 22 (A break was taken from
 23 9:58 a.m. to 10:57 a.m.)
 24 JUDGE KOPTA: Let's be back on the record.
 25 After some discussion off the record and some

Page 128

1 consultation that I made with the Commissioners,
 2 ultimately, we've decided to take this matter under
 3 advisement, and we will issue an order resolving the
 4 issues that have been presented in Staff's request.
 5 But just so I understand, counsel for Staff
 6 or Ms. Paul, have there been other circumstances in
 7 which Staff has used an expert in an investigation
 8 before it's become an adjudication; do you know?
 9 MS. BROWN: This is Sally with A -- Sally
 10 Brown with the AG's office. I have been trying to think
 11 of other examples and not coming up with any. No,
 12 it's -- it's typically, for example, in rate cases, we
 13 hire a cost of money expert, but that expert gets
 14 underway with his or her investigation once the
 15 prehearing conference has been held and the protective
 16 order has been entered. But it would be an --
 17 unfortunate, I think, if the ultimate outcome is that
 18 the Commission cannot hire experts in investigations no
 19 matter how complex they are if the Commission lacks the
 20 necessary or requisite expertise on its own Staff.
 21 So that's a -- you know, you may ultimately
 22 see a series of motions to amend complaints. For
 23 example, we might wind up with a fifth amended
 24 complaint. So it's -- it's awkward and unwieldy, and I
 25 appreciate your consideration of and taking it

Page 129

1 seriously.
2 JUDGE KOPTA: Would you consider an expert
3 witness that Staff has retained to be the equivalent or
4 actually Staff for that limited purpose?
5 MS. BROWN: Well, I considered that earlier
6 today, in fact, thinking that perhaps we could argue
7 that the consultant is an extension of Commission Staff.
8 However, the agreements that we've entered into with --
9 and typically when we enter into agreements with
10 consultants and expert witnesses as we have with
11 Mr. Roach, there's an express provision that states that
12 he or -- he or her, they're not extensions of Commission
13 Staff in the sense that they're employees or substitutes
14 for or stand in shoes of. So I have not been able to
15 resolve that in my mind, but I also went there.
16 JUDGE KOPTA: Yeah, okay. Well, I mean,
17 obviously this statute says the Commission and Public
18 Counsel and to the extent that an expert can be
19 considered as just another member of Staff of the
20 Commission for that limited purpose. That was the
21 question that came up in terms of our discussions.
22 MS. BROWN: Right, and -- and I appreciate
23 the -- the interesting issues that are raised and the
24 issues of first impression, but I also have very present
25 to mind that I would like the Commission to have present

Page 130

1 to mind the fact that CenturyLink -- that CenturyLink
2 been a regulated company in this jurisdiction by this
3 Commission for decades. CenturyLink knows what it's
4 like to provide discovery responses and response to data
5 requests. CenturyLink's no need to fight
6 unsophisticated to these proceedings before the
7 Commission.
8 And so I will use the word "unfortunate,"
9 but it's very disappointing that -- that we're even
10 here. I mean, I'm shocked we're even here, but we are
11 where we are and that's going to be the tone of this
12 litigation going forward. Thank you.
13 JUDGE KOPTA: Okay. Does CenturyLink have a
14 view in terms of whether an expert witness that Staff
15 has retained would be considered Staff for purposes of
16 the statute?
17 MS. ANDERL: Yes, we do, and I don't think
18 they would be. I think the contracts indicate they're
19 independent contractors, and I -- I don't see how the
20 mantle of Staff could kind of encompass that. I mean, I
21 kind of, you know -- well, I'll leave it at that.
22 JUDGE KOPTA: And is it your view -- your
23 position also that Commission Staff, even though these
24 documents are part of the Commission's records, anyone
25 who is not involved in that particular case and signed

Page 131

1 the protective order would not be able to look at those
2 confidential documents?
3 MS. ANDERL: Well, you know, the -- the
4 protective order's pretty clear that the information is
5 only to be used for purposes of that proceeding. I
6 suppose it's a little bit gray and I -- I mean, I don't
7 want to weaken my -- my position by admitting to a gray
8 area, but, you know, if there's a new employee,
9 obviously they have to have some way to get
10 institutional knowledge, right? And that's knowing the
11 history of some of the dockets in the case. Do they
12 need to see the confidential information? I don't know.
13 Does the Staff educating themselves on confidential
14 information in a closed docket technically violate the
15 protective order? I think it does.
16 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, and this is not an issue
17 that we've had to grapple with until now that I'm aware
18 of.
19 MS. ANDERL: Right, and so, you know, I'm --
20 I'm disappointed that -- that Staff is, you know, so
21 annoyed at me, because everybody agrees that this is a
22 case of first impression. So it's not like -- not like
23 we're just kind of throwing up barriers willy-nilly,
24 this is a -- really an area that's, you know,
25 unexplored. And like I said, I was really surprised to

Page 132

1 see that the expert Exhibit Bs come in, and so it's kind
2 of what prompted the whole thing.
3 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, we -- we have had
4 situations in which interested parties have requested
5 access to confidential information, IRPs being the one
6 that immediately come to mind. And in those
7 circumstances, the Company generally works out an NDA
8 with those individuals.
9 And I understand that CenturyLink doesn't
10 want to do that in this instance and that is your right.
11 And at least at this point, it's not something that we
12 would compel the Company to do if -- assuming we would
13 have the ability or the legal authority to do that.
14 MS. ANDERL: Well, and nobody asked us to do
15 that.
16 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, what I was going to say
17 is, you referenced earlier that you would be willing to
18 work with Staff on the three documents that you agree
19 are germane to the investigation, and I would encourage
20 you to continue to do that pending what the Commission
21 decides. And I would hope that there would be some
22 level of cooperation between Staff and the Company. I'm
23 not going to cast dispersions on either side, but I
24 would hope that there would be some way to work out at
25 least some of these things so that we can move forward

1 and be as efficient and effective as we can be.
 2 MS. ANDERL: Well, we are certainly willing
 3 to do that, but I was seeing head shakes on the other
 4 side of the counsel table in terms of whether we can
 5 work together so --
 6 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, I'm -- I'm simply --
 7 MS. BROWN: This is absolutely ridiculous,
 8 Your Honor. I'm very sorry we're even in the room here
 9 today, but since we are, in terms of cooperation, since
 10 CenturyLink has already indicated willingness to provide
 11 the three documents, I would urge the Company to do that
 12 as soon as possible. And we'll pass that along to the
 13 Commission's selected expert witness.
 14 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, and if that actually
 15 does happen, then I would ask that you let us know that
 16 that has happened, that there has been that cooperation
 17 and that at least some of the documents are no longer at
 18 issue.
 19 MS. ANDERL: Well, and, Your Honor, if I
 20 might suggest, because, you know, I just have no
 21 interest in getting into a protracting war on this,
 22 entertaining as that might be, if the Commission unhides
 23 the docket, we would be willing to file those three
 24 documents as confidential under the rule in that docket.
 25 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, still the -- there still

1 we will take -- at least I see your motion to enforce
 2 the protective order as moot at this point because
 3 there's no disagreement that what Staff is asking for
 4 was not consistent with the protective orders. So
 5 really the motion before me right now is to amend the
 6 protective order, or in the alternative, to issue a
 7 protective order in the new docket. And that is the
 8 determination that I'm taking under advisement.
 9 All right. Is there anything more that we
 10 need to talk about today? Hearing nothing, we are
 11 adjourned.
 12 (Adjourned at 11:09 a.m.)
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1 is the issue of the fact that they're confidential, and
 2 the expert would not have access to them unless there is
 3 some agreement between the Company and that expert or
 4 the Company and Staff on behalf of that expert to be
 5 able to review that information and retain its
 6 confidentiality. So that's where the cooperation I
 7 think really the rubber meets the road.
 8 MS. ANDERL: Sure, and I think the Company
 9 would be willing to entertain that -- the notion of
 10 receiving a letter from Staff signed by Staff and the
 11 expert stating that they would agree to handle the
 12 information in a manner as if it were protected by a
 13 protective order, something like that. I think that's
 14 something we did actually work out with Ms. Gafken as
 15 she alluded to years ago where Public Counsel just said
 16 we'll treat this as if it were under a protective order.
 17 That's our -- that's our pledge.
 18 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, whatever you all can
 19 work out, the Commission would be appreciative of on --
 20 on several levels so I just --
 21 MS. ANDERL: Well, like I said, the only way
 22 I think we can do that, though, is to unhide the docket,
 23 because right now we can't file anything in that docket.
 24 JUDGE KOPTA: Well, I will leave that to you
 25 to work out with Staff. And in the meantime, as I say,

1 CERTIFICATE
 2
 3 STATE OF WASHINGTON
 4 COUNTY OF THURSTON
 5
 6 I, Tayler Garlinghouse, a Certified Shorthand
 7 Reporter in and for the State of Washington, do hereby
 8 certify that the foregoing transcript is true and
 9 accurate to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability.
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 Tayler Garlinghouse, CCR 3358



<p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p>a.m 105:18 108:2 127:23,23 135:12</p> <p>ability 121:23 122:8 123:19 132:13 136:9</p> <p>able 110:14 111:13 115:14 118:12 120:24 124:12 126:6 129:14 131:1 134:5</p> <p>absence 124:25</p> <p>absent 116:12</p> <p>absolutely 113:12 125:12 133:7</p> <p>accept 111:9</p> <p>access 108:20 113:16 114:17 116:19,21 118:8 118:12 119:16,17 119:21 123:16 124:20 126:6,10 132:5 134:2</p> <p>accommodate 121:1</p> <p>accumulative 118:19</p> <p>accurate 136:9</p> <p>act 117:7</p> <p>actual 120:16</p> <p>add 123:9,14 124:16</p> <p>add- 118:22</p> <p>addition 117:12</p> <p>additional 118:1,3 118:23 119:10 123:14</p> <p>adjourned 135:11 135:12</p> <p>adjudication 120:19 128:8</p> <p>adjusted 113:15</p> <p>administrative 105:16 106:2 108:18 127:9</p>	<p>admissible 126:3</p> <p>admitting 131:7</p> <p>advised 109:23</p> <p>advisement 128:3 135:8</p> <p>afternoon 111:15</p> <p>AG's 128:10</p> <p>ago 134:15</p> <p>agree 110:10 114:5 115:11 132:18 134:11</p> <p>agreed 116:1</p> <p>agreement 111:23 112:1,10,12 114:20 115:1,14 115:18 117:21 125:18 134:3</p> <p>agreements 129:8,9</p> <p>agrees 131:21</p> <p>allow 116:5 118:10 120:16 126:19</p> <p>allowing 114:17</p> <p>alluded 134:15</p> <p>alternative 105:7 118:16 119:24 135:6</p> <p>alternatively 120:17</p> <p>amenable 118:15</p> <p>amend 128:22 135:5</p> <p>amended 128:23</p> <p>amendment 115:3</p> <p>analysis 114:6,16</p> <p>analyzed 122:1</p> <p>Anderl 106:21 108:24,25 109:22 109:23 110:25 111:7,10,14,25 112:4,11,20 113:1 115:16 120:2 121:2,4 125:11,24 130:17 131:3,19 132:14 133:2,19 134:8,21</p>	<p>angry 122:15</p> <p>annoyed 131:21</p> <p>anticipate 117:25</p> <p>anybody 111:16</p> <p>appear 119:14</p> <p>appearance 109:12</p> <p>appearances 108:22</p> <p>appearing 109:6,9 109:14</p> <p>appears 110:4 119:16</p> <p>Appendix 117:22</p> <p>Application 105:4 108:13</p> <p>appreciate 111:10 128:25 129:22</p> <p>appreciative 134:19</p> <p>appropriate 116:2</p> <p>Approval 105:7</p> <p>April 105:17 108:1</p> <p>area 131:8,24</p> <p>argue 116:25 129:6</p> <p>argument 113:2</p> <p>arguments 120:23</p> <p>arrangement 117:8</p> <p>asked 115:5 127:20 132:14</p> <p>asking 119:5 120:14 125:1 135:3</p> <p>asks 122:20</p> <p>assert 105:6 119:18</p> <p>assistance 124:12</p> <p>Assistant 106:8,12 106:16 109:5,8,14</p> <p>assisting 117:10</p> <p>Associate 106:21</p> <p>assume 121:16</p> <p>assuming 132:12</p> <p>attachments 115:1</p> <p>attorney 106:8,12 106:16,17 108:25 109:6,9,14 121:19</p>	<p>121:20,23</p> <p>attorneys 121:16 121:17</p> <p>audit 125:15</p> <p>audits 114:3</p> <p>authority 119:25 132:13</p> <p>available 113:9 116:14</p> <p>Avenue 105:23 106:17,22</p> <p>avoid 118:19</p> <p>aware 131:17</p> <p>awkward 128:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <hr/> <p>B 117:22</p> <p>back 115:24 127:24</p> <p>barriers 131:23</p> <p>basically 114:11</p> <p>basis 112:13 116:11</p> <p>bearing 113:12 114:23</p> <p>beginning 108:22</p> <p>behalf 109:6,9,14 134:4</p> <p>behavior 121:6</p> <p>believe 116:7 122:16,19,19 123:15 125:8,19</p> <p>best 121:1 136:9</p> <p>beyond 122:18</p> <p>bit 110:2 120:22 123:22 131:6</p> <p>boils 110:13 115:9</p> <p>books 123:10</p> <p>bounds 110:6</p> <p>Box 106:8,12</p> <p>break 127:22</p> <p>bridge 106:15 109:11</p> <p>brief 122:23</p> <p>broadband 113:17</p> <p>Broadwing 105:9</p> <p>Brown 106:7 108:16 109:5,5</p>	<p>121:20 124:16,18 125:21 126:14 128:9,10 129:5,22 133:7</p> <p>Bs 132:1</p> <p>Buell 105:22</p> <p>bunch 108:14</p> <p>business 109:1 113:18</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <hr/> <p>C 106:1 107:1 108:4 136:1,1</p> <p>called 125:22</p> <p>Capex 113:15</p> <p>captioned 108:7,10 108:12</p> <p>card 109:2</p> <p>careful 111:8</p> <p>case 123:12 130:25 131:11,22</p> <p>cases 128:12</p> <p>cash 113:16</p> <p>cast 132:23</p> <p>cause 114:5,16</p> <p>causing 116:24</p> <p>caveat 115:10</p> <p>CCR 105:21 136:13</p> <p>Central 125:23</p> <p>CenturyLink 105:5 105:11 106:20 108:9,11,13,25 110:5 111:2 117:19 119:12 123:12 124:23 125:24 126:17 130:1,1,3,13 132:9 133:10</p> <p>CenturyLink's 116:11 119:23 130:5</p> <p>CenturyTel 108:8</p> <p>certain 110:14</p> <p>certainly 133:2</p> <p>Certified 136:6</p>
--	--	---	--	--

<p>certify 136:8 chance 111:11 change 115:11 characterize 119:8 chase 112:21 chilling 122:8 127:3 chooses 127:1 circuit 125:15 circumstances 116:4 120:20 128:6 132:7 clarification 111:10 clarify 109:18 111:1 118:6 119:12 122:25 clear 121:22 131:4 clearly 121:9 client 111:11 closed 112:5 121:25 124:21 125:17 131:14 come 118:13 132:1 132:6 comfortable 111:19 112:24 120:25 coming 128:11 Commission 105:2 105:19 106:4,6 107:3 108:8,11 109:6,9 116:4,8 117:6 118:1,8 119:18,22 120:8 120:14,19 121:1 123:19 124:19,22 125:14 126:5,9,16 126:20 127:1,1,18 128:18,19 129:7 129:12,17,20,25 130:3,7,23 132:20 133:22 134:19 Commission's 113:7 130:24 133:13 Commissioners</p>	<p>128:1 Communications 105:9,9,10 company 108:23 110:22 111:19,23 112:3,9,18 115:4 115:23 116:1 119:5,5,6,7,7,9 123:11 125:7 126:19 130:2 132:7,12,22 133:11 134:3,4,8 company's 122:8 compel 132:12 competing 108:19 complaint 128:24 complaints 128:22 complex 128:19 compliance 114:2 125:16 concern 119:13 concerns 120:4 conducting 114:9 124:24 conference 127:12 128:15 confidence 122:10 confidential 108:20 110:14 113:5 114:20,23,25 115:3,5 116:14,19 118:23 119:16,17 119:20 120:6,17 121:9 122:9 123:20 131:2,12 131:13 132:5 133:24 134:1 confidentiality 117:4,18 118:3 119:23 123:6,14 134:6 conjunction 110:20 consent 115:6 consider 129:2 consideration</p>	<p>128:25 considered 129:5 129:19 130:15 consistent 135:4 consistently 120:19 consult 111:11 consultant 117:7 118:7,10,14,23 129:7 consultants 129:10 consultation 128:1 Cont 107:1 contact 109:1 contain 123:5 contend 117:17 content 119:11 123:4 contesting 110:8 continue 132:20 contracted 124:11 contractors 130:19 contracts 130:18 Control 105:8 convenience 114:12 cooperation 132:22 133:9,16 134:6 Corporation 108:11 correct 109:20 110:8,22,23 cost 128:13 counsel 106:15,21 109:15 120:7 121:12 128:5 129:18 133:4 134:15 count 113:5 countless 113:4,5 counts 113:16 COUNTY 136:4 couple 110:16 120:4 course 121:23 court 109:2 Crossing 105:10</p>	<p>cut 112:21 <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <hr/> D 108:4 d/b/a 108:9,11 data 126:16 130:4 day 124:1 debate 123:22,25 debt 113:15 decades 130:3 December 114:7 117:10 decided 128:2 decides 132:21 declined 120:20 Declining 105:6 degree 122:10 deign 126:19 denied 124:19 deny 122:12,13 department 114:24 115:3 desire 120:24 destroyed 120:12 detailed 116:9 117:5,22 determination 135:8 determined 118:24 different 127:18 disagreement 135:3 disappointed 131:20 disappointing 130:9 disclose 122:9 disclosed 121:12 disclosing 116:23 117:23 disclosure 113:25 disconcerting 122:4 discovery 113:8 117:11 120:11 126:2 130:4</p>	<p>discuss 108:19 126:4 discussed 117:20 discussing 118:2 discussion 127:25 discussions 112:9 129:21 dispersions 132:23 dispute 110:4 distributed 121:10 diversity 114:2 125:15 docket 105:4 108:7 108:9,12 109:25 112:6 113:12 114:3,12,13,14,17 114:21 115:7 117:2,2,7,14 118:2,4 119:19 120:18 121:19 122:2 125:13,16 125:17 126:16 131:14 133:23,24 134:22,23 135:7 dockets 108:21,21 109:19 110:7,15 112:5 113:4 116:10 120:5,16 120:21 121:24 124:20,25 126:17 131:11 document 113:21 114:6 document-by-do... 112:13 documents 110:18 111:12,18,20 112:13 113:6 114:19 115:10,25 119:6,9,11 122:16 123:4,5 125:1,5,6 125:10,18,25 126:18 130:24 131:2 132:18 133:11,17,24</p>
--	---	--	--	---

doing 110:16 116:8 127:17	example 115:15 120:20 128:12,23	figure 122:18	getting 133:21	hidden 112:6 126:15
Drive 105:20 106:4	examples 128:11	file 114:16 120:9 123:23 133:23 134:23	give 113:2	hire 128:13,18
duplicative 118:19	Exhibit 121:19,20 132:1	filed 113:6 114:3,6 114:11 117:1 121:20 124:20 125:13,16,17	given 117:12 119:10 122:20 126:11	hired 117:6 126:6
E	exhibits 120:8 121:24,24 124:20	files 120:11	gives 115:21	history 131:11
E 106:1,1 107:1,1 108:4,4 136:1,1	existing 127:7	filing 112:11	Glenn 117:6 126:9	Honor 108:24 110:25 112:20 120:2 121:4 124:16 125:11,21 133:8,19
earlier 117:20 129:5 132:17	exists 116:13	find 122:3	Global 105:10	hope 132:21,24
easiest 116:5	Expedited 105:7	Fine 122:18	go 113:1 118:10 127:21	horrible 122:7 127:2
East 111:17	expedition 118:11	first 109:18 116:20 117:19 118:18 129:24 131:22	going 112:17 120:22 124:2,6 126:19 130:11,12 132:16,23	I
EBITDA 113:15	expert 110:14 111:13 112:1 113:9,20 114:2,10 114:17 115:1 116:2 120:24 121:24 124:5,7,7 124:19 126:6,6,10 126:20 128:7,13 128:13 129:2,10 129:18 130:14 132:1 133:13 134:2,3,4,11	fishing 118:10	good 108:24 113:22	identified 121:16 123:7
educating 131:13	expertise 124:11 128:20	flow 113:16	Government 126:23	III 105:14
effect 122:8 124:22 127:3	experts 110:19 128:18	foregoing 136:8	grants 123:18	immediately 132:6
effective 133:1	express 129:11	form 116:11	grapple 131:17	impair 124:6
efficient 133:1	extension 129:7	forma 113:15	gray 131:6,7	impaired 111:2
either 118:15 132:23	extensions 129:12	forth 115:24	Gregory 105:16 106:3 108:17	implicitly 123:20
elongate 126:21	extensively 117:13	forward 130:12 132:25	gross 124:18	impression 129:24 131:22
employee 131:8	extent 121:14 129:18	Fourth 105:23	guess 116:5	in- 116:16
employees 129:13	extremely 122:7	frankly 121:6	H	in-house 108:25
encompass 130:20	F	free 113:16	hamper 127:1	incident 125:5
encourage 132:19	F 136:1	Fukano 106:11 109:8,8 110:10,22 110:23 113:22 116:6,7 120:23 121:3 122:23,25	handle 134:11	include 123:11 127:7
enforce 112:12 135:1	fact 113:21 129:6 130:1 134:1	full 109:1	happen 126:11 133:15	included 123:1
enforceable 115:19	familiar 111:17,18	further 117:5 123:9	happened 133:16	inconceivable 113:19
enter 115:18 120:18 129:9	far 121:6,14	future 127:20	happens 124:4	incontrovertibly 122:17
entered 117:20 118:4 128:16 129:8	FCC 125:15	G	happy 112:21 114:16	independent 118:7 118:10,14 130:19
entering 112:9	February 114:7	Gafken 106:16 109:13,13 134:14	Harry 106:11 109:8	indicate 130:18
entertain 134:9	Federal 126:23	Garlinghouse 105:21 136:6,13	harry.fukano@u... 106:14	indicated 133:10
entertaining 133:22	fifth 128:23	general 106:8,12,16 106:17,21 109:6,9 109:14 119:2,12	head 109:21 133:3	Indirect 105:8
entity 115:18	fight 130:5	generally 132:7	hear 115:22	individuals 132:8
equivalent 129:3		germane 132:19	heard 115:23	influence 119:8
essentially 119:8			hearing 105:14 109:16 117:14 135:10	informal 114:14
established 111:1			heartburn 126:22	information 108:20 109:1,24 110:15 113:14,19,21 114:23 116:14,15
event 114:8,9			held 128:15	
Evergreen 105:20 106:4			help 123:13	
everybody 131:21				
evidence 126:3				

<p>116:16,20,22,24 117:1,4,16,19,23 118:20,24,24,25 119:3,4,16,18,21 119:22,24 120:6 120:11,17,25 121:10 122:1,9 123:2,16,20,21,25 124:3,8 131:4,12 131:14 132:5 134:5,12 injuries 116:16 injury 116:24 inspect 123:10 instance 132:10 institutional 131:10 Integrated 120:21 intend 118:9 intending 111:4 Inter 108:8 interest 133:21 interested 132:4 interesting 129:23 internal 118:9 123:3 interrupted 111:3 investigate 124:10 investigated 125:4 investigating 126:24 investigation 110:20 111:6 114:9 117:13 122:2,17 123:8 124:7,13,22,25 125:2,23 126:1 127:2 128:7,14 132:19 investigations 125:20 128:18 investigative 119:13 122:14 127:9 investigator 107:3</p>	<p>124:9 involved 120:16 130:25 involving 108:14 110:21 125:5 IRPs 132:5 irrelevant 125:22 126:1 Island 108:9 issue 110:9 114:14 114:19 116:3 119:15 126:5 127:16 128:3 131:16 133:18 134:1 135:6 issued 110:7 115:7 issues 120:13 124:14 128:4 129:23,24 issuing 118:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">J</p> <hr/> <p>J 105:16 106:3 108:17 January 121:20 judge 105:16 106:2 108:6,17,18 109:3 109:11,16 110:1 110:12,24 111:4,9 111:21 112:2,8,16 112:23 115:12,22 120:3 122:22,24 123:17 124:15,17 124:24 125:4 126:13 127:14,24 129:2,16 130:13 130:22 131:16 132:3,16 133:6,14 133:25 134:18,24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">L</p> <hr/> <p>lacks 128:19 language 116:18 law 105:16 106:2 108:18 127:9 lead 126:2 leave 130:21 134:24 legal 132:13 legitimate 116:15 116:21 117:1,15 119:21 length 125:25 let's 108:6,22 115:22 122:18 127:8,21,24 letter 134:10 level 105:8,11 108:14 132:22 level-headed 121:5</p>	<p>132:1 know 114:11,13,24 121:6 123:5 124:5 125:24 127:14 128:8,21 130:21 131:3,8,12,19,20 131:24 133:15,20 knowing 131:10 knowledge 131:10 136:9 knows 130:3 Kopta 105:16 106:3 108:6,17,17 109:3,11,16 110:1 110:12,24 111:4,9 111:21 112:2,8,16 112:23 115:12,22 120:3 122:22,24 123:17 124:15,17 124:24 125:4 126:13 127:14,24 129:2,16 130:13 130:22 131:16 132:3,16 133:6,14 133:25 134:18,24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">L</p> <hr/> <p>levels 113:16 134:20 limitation 116:19 limited 129:4,20 line 109:11 113:16 Lisa 106:16,21 108:24 109:13 lisa.anderl@cent... 106:23 lisa.gafken@atg.... 106:19 list 110:18 111:12 114:6 115:10 listed 119:25 litigation 130:12 little 110:2 120:22 131:6 LLC 105:9,9,10,11 105:22 loath 115:24 lobby 119:10 long 113:2 121:25 longer 109:24 126:15 133:17 look 123:24 124:4 131:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">M</p> <hr/> <p>M 115:3 maintain 117:15 119:23 manner 134:12 mantle 130:20 material 118:13 materials 118:11 matter 105:4 108:12 111:6 116:12 119:2 123:13,25 128:2 128:19 matters 117:12 mean 121:7 124:4 126:15 129:16 130:10,20 131:6 means 123:20 126:12</p>	<p>measures 123:6 meets 134:7 member 129:19 merger 113:12 114:12,21 methods 116:8 127:6 military 114:24 115:3,4,5 Military's 115:6 mind 127:19 129:15,25 130:1 132:6 modification 118:21 127:7 modify 113:10 118:17 119:19 120:15 122:5,13 modifying 113:23 moment 116:3 120:3 127:21 money 128:13 moot 135:2 morning 108:24 112:19 126:4 motion 110:5 112:12 116:9 117:6 118:16 120:1 122:12,14 135:1,5 motions 108:19 128:22 move 132:25 multiple 121:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <hr/> <p>N 106:1 107:1 108:4 narrowed 110:2 National 105:25 NDA 132:7 necessarily 123:5 necessary 115:25 124:12 128:20 necessity 123:22 need 113:20 114:25</p>
--	---	---	---

<p>116:15,21 117:1 117:15 119:21 130:5 131:12 135:10 needless 113:3 negative 124:21 negotiate 112:18 network 114:8,9 never 120:14 125:13 Nevertheless 113:23 new 122:2 131:8 135:7 nods 109:21 nondisclosure 111:23,25 115:14 115:17 117:21 NORS 114:4 123:1 125:12 Notice 105:4 108:13 notion 134:9 novel 114:14 numbers 113:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <hr/> <p>O 108:4 o0o-- 108:3 object 115:8 121:23 125:12 objection 116:11 obtained 121:10 obviously 115:6 123:18 129:17 131:9 occur 126:12 offer 112:15 offered 112:11,12 office 106:17 128:10 okay 110:1 112:16 113:1 115:12 129:16 130:13 Olympia 105:20,24 106:5,9,13 108:1</p>	<p>once 128:14 opened 121:25 opportunity 119:8 119:10 opposed 115:14 options 112:25 order 105:6 112:6 113:10,23 114:15 115:7,13,17,20 116:13,18 118:1 118:17,22 119:19 120:5,15,18 121:11 122:5,13 123:13 128:3,16 131:1,15 134:13 134:16 135:2,6,7 order's 131:4 orders 110:7 112:5 116:10,12 121:8 123:24 127:6,8 135:4 outrage 110:21 114:4 117:10 121:15 124:23 125:15,22,24 126:24 outcome 127:4 128:17 outraged 121:6 outrageous 122:3 outside 110:6 overlook 127:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <hr/> <p>P 106:1,1 107:1,1 108:4 pages 105:15 123:23 paragraph 121:9 Park 105:20 106:4 part 113:6,8 117:8 125:2,17 130:24 participate 117:13 particular 126:9 130:25 particularly 113:11</p>	<p>parties 110:17 132:4 party 121:12 pass 133:12 path 127:10 Paul 107:3 124:9 125:3,8 128:6 pending 117:5 132:20 penetration 113:17 people 111:16 permit 118:22 119:20 permits 127:9 person 120:6 personally 126:22 persons 116:15,21 116:23 perspective 112:17 115:13 place 111:23 112:1 114:13 117:3 119:23 Plan 120:21 play 127:19 pleading 111:22 pleadings 110:3 pledge 134:17 PO 106:8,12 point 110:11,19 121:1 127:15 132:11 135:2 position 111:19 130:23 131:7 possesses 119:4 possible 116:8 120:10 133:12 potential 117:14 potentiality 115:10 potentially 123:7 practical 124:2 127:16 practice 120:10 precedent 122:7 127:2</p>	<p>prefer 118:16,17 119:3 prehearing 127:12 128:15 prepared 113:2 preparing 117:9,11 present 107:2 129:24,25 presented 119:13 128:4 presents 119:7 preserve 117:3,18 123:13 presiding 108:18 pressing 120:13 pretty 131:4 prevent 116:21,23 previous 124:20 125:5 prior 125:19 pro 113:15 problematic 127:11 proceed 109:17 proceeding 121:13 122:9 126:22 131:5 proceedings 130:6 prohibit 117:22 prompted 132:2 properly 122:10 proposed 110:16 proposing 115:9 propound 126:16 protec- 121:8,10 protect 113:25 122:18 protected 122:11 134:12 protection 115:21 118:3 123:14 protective 110:7 112:4,6,12 113:9 113:23 114:15 115:7,13,17,20 116:10,13,18</p>	<p>118:1,17,22 119:19 120:5,15 120:18 121:8,11 122:5,13 123:12 123:23 127:6,8 128:15 131:1,4,15 134:13,16 135:2,4 135:6,7 protracting 133:21 provide 116:2 118:2,23 130:4 133:10 provided 108:20 109:1 110:5,15 113:7,22 115:1 118:14 120:7 125:13 provider 116:17,24 provides 117:24 provision 111:2 113:13,14 115:4 127:7 129:11 public 106:15 109:15 114:14 115:18,20 123:11 129:17 134:15 purpose 117:7 129:4,20 purposes 116:20 121:13 122:1,2 130:15 131:5 put 114:13 117:3 119:22</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <hr/> <p>QC 108:12 que- 126:24 question 124:2 126:8,11,25 129:21 Qwest 108:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <hr/> <p>R 106:1 107:1 108:4 136:1 raised 129:23</p>
--	--	--	---	---

<p>rate 128:12 RCW 123:10,18 reach 111:16 read 110:3 really 110:12 111:7 111:14 112:24 122:3 131:24,25 134:7 135:5 Realtime 105:22 reasons 117:19 118:18 receive 123:19 received 110:17,18 112:14 121:19 receiving 134:10 recollection 114:22 125:14 recommendation 122:4 record 108:6 111:1 113:7,8 121:18 123:1 127:21,24 127:25 records 115:20 120:7 126:10 130:24 referenced 132:17 referencing 111:5 refile 115:6 refiling 118:19 reflection 119:12 regard 115:2 regarding 114:7 regulated 130:2 regulatory 125:9 related 117:9 relatedly 116:22 relay 116:2 relevance 114:4 relevant 118:25 122:17 relief 122:20 rephrase 126:7 report 117:9 123:1 REPORTED</p>	<p>105:21 reporter 109:2 136:7 Reporting 105:22 reports 114:2,4 121:15 125:12,16 125:23 representing 108:25 request 113:10 115:20 119:7,24 123:2,12 125:9 128:4 requested 119:1 121:11 125:6,19 127:17 132:4 requesting 110:6 119:4 requests 113:24 117:11 126:16 130:5 required 123:6 requires 120:5 requisite 128:20 reservations 121:2 resolve 129:15 resolving 128:3 Resource 120:21 respond 116:6 120:2 121:3 response 112:15 122:23 130:4 responses 130:4 responsible 117:9 responsive 123:8 result 116:17 retain 134:5 retained 129:3 130:15 retroactively 122:5 returned 120:6,12 revenue 113:15 review 110:14,19 111:13 114:22 117:1,16 119:3,9</p>	<p>119:20 120:17,25 123:19,21 124:8 134:5 reviewed 121:12,17 reviewing 118:25 ridiculous 133:7 right 109:3,18 110:12 111:21 112:5,25 115:16 115:22 122:22 123:10,15,24 129:22 131:10,19 132:10 134:23 135:5,9 risk 116:13 Roach 116:25 117:7,8,12,15,21 117:23 119:15,17 119:20,21 126:9 129:11 road 134:7 room 106:22 133:8 root 114:5,16 rubber 134:7 rule 133:24 rummage 118:8 120:10</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <hr/> <p>S 106:1 107:1 108:4 safeguards 117:2 117:18 119:22 Sally 106:7 109:5 128:9,9 sallyb@atg.wa.gov 106:10 sanction 122:6 says 129:17 scope 110:2 Seattle 105:23,24 106:18,22 second 116:22 117:25 118:21 Secondly 117:17 see 112:2 113:20 114:2,10 127:11</p>	<p>128:22 130:19 131:12 132:1 135:1 seeing 109:20 133:3 seeking 109:24 seeks 110:19 selected 133:13 Senior 106:8 109:5 sense 112:19 129:13 sensitive 113:18 116:23 series 128:22 seriously 129:1 serves 116:20 service 113:13 117:10 123:11 services 125:9 settlement 114:20 114:25 125:18 shakes 133:3 share 126:20 SharePoint 118:8 123:3 shocked 130:10 shoes 129:14 Shorthand 136:6 side 132:23 133:4 signature 123:23 signed 123:6 130:25 134:10 significant 116:13 similar 118:4 125:19 simply 111:5 133:6 single 126:17,18 sit 121:17 sitting 112:18 situations 132:4 skill 136:9 somebody 115:19 somewhat 127:11 soon 133:12 sorry 133:8 sorts 125:1</p>	<p>South 105:20 106:4 Southwest 105:20 specifically 123:18 spite 122:15 Staff 106:6 109:4,7 109:10,23 110:6,8 110:13,18,20 111:12,24 112:1,3 112:9 113:24 114:1 115:9,15,23 116:25 117:10,14 117:17,20,24,25 118:6,9,13,15,22 118:25 119:2,10 119:13,18 120:13 121:16,25 122:16 122:20 123:2,7,9 123:15,21,22 124:3,4 125:14 126:16,20 127:17 128:5,7,20 129:3 129:4,7,13,19 130:14,15,20,23 131:13,20 132:18 132:22 134:4,10 134:10,25 135:3 Staff's 111:22 112:16 113:10,19 114:17 119:9 120:24 121:6 122:4,12,13 124:6 124:19,22 126:1,6 126:9 127:1 128:4 stage 117:6 stand 129:14 start 108:22 started 125:12 state 115:2 116:12 119:6 121:9 136:3 136:7 states 129:11 stating 134:11 statute 129:17 130:16 statutory 119:25</p>
---	---	--	---	--

<p>step 120:23 stuff 108:14 subject 111:6 115:11 submit 115:19 123:23 subpoena 119:25 122:14 subpoenas 127:9 substitutes 129:13 sufficient 117:2,18 suggest 116:18 133:20 suggested 118:16 Suite 105:23 106:17 summary 119:14 support 117:25 suppose 131:6 sure 115:17 126:14 134:8 surprised 131:25 SUSIE 107:3 SW 106:4 system 118:9 123:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <hr/> <p>T 136:1,1 table 133:4 take 111:20 127:15 128:2 135:1 taken 127:22 talk 127:2 135:10 talking 109:19 Taylor 105:21 136:6,13 technical 124:11 technically 131:14 Telecom 105:11 telecommunication 113:13 Telecommunicati... 105:10 terms 115:25 117:21 118:3,4 127:6 129:21</p>	<p> 130:14 133:4,9 testimony 117:11 Thank 109:3 130:12 themselves 131:13 theoretically 120:9 thing 132:2 things 132:25 think 110:10 115:5 115:16,20 116:9 121:7 122:7,12 128:10,17 130:17 130:18 131:15 134:7,8,13,22 thinking 129:6 third 118:6 119:2 thorough 124:13 three 108:21 117:19 118:18 132:18 133:11,23 throwing 131:23 THURSTON 136:4 time 111:15,16 114:21 124:1 127:17 today 121:18 129:6 133:9 135:10 tone 130:11 top 123:14 Transaction 105:4 108:13 transcript 136:8 Transfer 105:8 Transportation 105:2,19 106:3 108:8,10 treat 134:16 true 111:24 120:10 123:17 136:8 trying 121:5 128:10 two 108:21 110:7 114:19 115:11 116:1,8,20 121:17 122:16 126:18 type 125:6</p>	<p>typically 128:12 129:9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">U</p> <hr/> <p>ultimate 127:3 128:17 ultimately 128:2,21 Um 110:24 uncomfortable 120:22 understand 109:19 111:22 114:1,3 120:23,24 124:13 128:5 132:9 understanding 109:22 understatement 124:18 Understood 111:9 undertaking 110:21 underway 128:14 unexplored 131:25 unfettered 118:7 unfortunate 128:17 130:8 unhide 134:22 unhides 133:22 unsophisticated 130:6 unwieldy 128:24 urge 133:11 use 130:8 UT-132234 108:7 UT-14 118:5 UT-140597 108:9 109:20 116:10 UT-17 118:5 UT-170042 105:4 108:12 109:20 116:10 UT-181051 117:8 117:14 127:12 Utilities 105:2,19 106:3 108:7,10</p>	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <hr/> <p>version 114:20,25 versus 108:8,11 victory 127:10 view 123:4 126:1 130:14,22 viewed 123:2 violate 131:14 violations 121:7 VOLUME 105:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <hr/> <p>wait 126:15 want 111:7 113:3 115:13 131:7 132:10 wanted 109:18 118:12 wants 110:13 111:12 114:1 war 133:21 Washington 105:1 105:11,19,20,23 106:5,9,13,18,22 108:1,7,10 115:2 136:3,7 way 111:5 113:24 116:5 131:9 132:24 134:21 ways 110:16 we'll 133:12 134:16 we're 112:18 126:3 127:12 130:9,10 131:23 133:8 we've 110:1 118:2 128:2 129:8 131:17 weaken 131:7 went 125:24 129:15 wholly 125:22 willing 122:15 132:17 133:2,23 134:9 willingness 122:8 133:10</p>	<p>willy-nilly 131:23 Wiltel 105:9 wind 128:23 wishing 109:12 witness 110:14 124:19 129:3 130:14 133:13 witnesses 129:10 word 130:8 work 112:13 122:16 132:18,24 133:5 134:14,19 134:25 works 108:16 132:7 wouldn't 115:8 wrestling 127:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <hr/> <p>Yeah 129:16 year 121:21 years 134:15 yesterday 110:17 111:15 112:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Z</p> <hr/> <p>zones 111:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">0</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <hr/> <p>1-3 109:24 10:57 127:23 105-136 105:15 11:09 135:12 12th 114:7 1300 105:20 106:4 1325 105:23 14 119:19 140597 114:3 1506 106:22 1600 106:22 17 119:19 170 125:13 181 118:2</p>
--	---	--	--	---

<p>181051 112:7 114:13 115:7 1840 105:23</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">9</p> <p>9:30 105:18 108:2 9:58 127:23</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>2000 106:17 2014 125:14 2019 105:17 108:1 114:7 117:10 206 105:24 106:18 106:23 27th 114:7 287-9066 105:24 28th 114:8</p>	<p>911 110:21 111:2 113:14 114:23 124:23 125:5,15 125:16,24 98101 105:23 98104 106:18 98191 106:22 98504 105:20 106:5 106:9,13 991 117:10</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>3 105:8,11,17 108:1 108:15 3:30 111:15 30 115:9 3358 105:21 136:13 345-1574 106:23 360 105:24 106:5,9 106:13</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>40128 106:8,12 464-6595 106:18</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>534-9066 105:24 586-5522 106:13 5th 106:17</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>664-1160 106:5 664-1193 106:9</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>7 121:9 7th 106:22</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p>80.04.070 123:10 80.04.095 123:18 800 105:25 106:17 846-6989 105:25</p>				