

1 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Father Kenny.

2 FATHER KENNY: Madame Chair and gentlemen of the
3 National Gaming Impact Study Commission, I'm pleased to welcome
4 you to Las Vegas. If you've had a chance to study my
5 biographical background, you will note that I've spent most of
6 my life in Las Vegas. My father, William J. Kenny, now
7 deceased, worked for nearly 30 years in the gaming industry,
8 most of that time as a keno rider and boss at the Horseshoe
9 Hotel and Casino in downtown Las Vegas.

10 During my summers back home from my seminary studies
11 I also worked at the Horseshoe Hotel and Casino. First, before
12 I was 21 years old, in what is called the count room, where
13 revenue is counted. I counted money for the non-gaming
14 revenues, restaurant, bar and hotel. When I turned 21 I was an
15 accountant for keno money revenues and eventually worked in the
16 casino cage as a cashier.

17 Growing up in Las Vegas, attending grade school and
18 high school here, many of my classmates were also from families
19 who owned or worked in gambling properties. Since my ordination
20 to the Catholic priesthood 27 years ago, I've been assigned in
21 the Las Vegas area. Therefore, I believe that I'm uniquely
22 qualified to speak to you, the members of the National Gambling
23 Impact Study Commission, about the impact of gambling upon
24 myself, friends and relatives, and the thousands of families to
25 whom I have and am ministering as a priest.

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1 Yes, I've heard all the jokes, especially in the
2 seminaries in California, Washington D.C. and Europe about
3 living in Sin City, lost wages, et cetera. I always answer that
4 I grew up in the city and turned out pretty good as an ordained
5 Catholic priest, for once you leave the gambling corridors of
6 the casino center on the Las Vegas strip, Las Vegas is just like
7 any other city in the southwestern United States. Drive along
8 any of our neighborhood streets and you could as well be in
9 Phoenix, Albuquerque or Palm Springs.

10 So many times I've been asked the rather ridiculous
11 question well, where do you people live in Las Vegas. I wonder
12 what answer they expect. In the hotels, in trailers behind the
13 casinos, underground? We live like everybody else. In houses,
14 condos, townhouses, trailers, et cetera. We live on real
15 streets. In our neighborhoods we have schools, parks, baseball,
16 softball, soccer and football fields. Basketball courts,
17 gymnasiums, YMCA's and YWCA's, Seven 11's, supermarkets,
18 shopping centers, malls, movie theaters, ice and roller skating
19 rinks, water parks, bicycling and jogging paths. We have
20 churches; more per capita than many cities in the USA.

21 When outside of Las Vegas many Catholics tell me
22 that they've been to the Catholic church in Las Vegas. I
23 politely correct them that they were probably at the cathedral
24 or the shrine to catholic churches on the strip serving the
25 tourist population. But in fact, there are more than 20 other

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1 Catholic parishes in the Las Vegas area serving thousands of
2 Catholic parishioners.

3 My parish of Christ the King Catholic Community has
4 over 3,000 families registered, and we're not the largest. Two
5 or three others have four to 5,000 registered households. Our
6 children belong to cub, brownie, boy and girl scout troops with
7 parents- adults as their leaders. They play in soccer leagues,
8 Pop Warner Football, Little League, et cetera. It is as unfair
9 to judge all of Las Vegas by the image of the casino center and
10 the Las Vegas Strip as it is to judge all those who live in New
11 Orleans by the French Quarter or Bourbon Street, or those who
12 live in New York City by Manhattan or Times Square, or all San
13 Franciscans by Fishermen's Wharf or the Tenderloin District.

14 Once you leave the parts of town that attract the
15 tourist population, the rest of the city is as normal as apple
16 pie and the 4th of July. What impact does the casino industry
17 have on the community? As far as negative impact I see very
18 little that differentiates it from other parts of the country.
19 Though I've served as a priest only in Las Vegas, I have
20 classmates from the Catholic University of America in Washington
21 D.C. from practically each of the other 49 states. When we get
22 together and compare notes we all face the same problems.
23 Dysfunctional families, the problems of both parents working,
24 latchkey kids, divorce, the impact of sex and violence in the
25 media especially on TV, peer pressure, the enormous pressure
26 competition at school and in athletics, the attraction to money,

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1 the lack of real heroes, the disappointment in government, et
2 cetera. These problems in Las Vegas with a population of over
3 1,000,000, are also faced by people living in New York,
4 Baltimore, Miami, Chicago, St. Louis, Denver, San Diego, Phoenix
5 and Seattle.

6 I do see some positive benefits offered by the
7 casino industry. Because the casinos in Las Vegas are open 24
8 hours there are many more jobs to fill than might be available
9 in other industries that have business hours of only 9:00 to
10 5:00 or even early morning to late night. Every casino and
11 hotel has a need for three shifts; day, swing, and graveyard in
12 many of its departments. Casino, restaurants, hotel, shops, et
13 cetera. Because there are three shifts each day in many of
14 these casino-hotel departments, some couples do split their
15 individual shifts between them resulting in one parent always
16 being at home with the children. It has a financial advantage
17 of not having to pay for day care, but of course it puts a
18 strain on the couple themselves and their own time together as a
19 couple and as a family, but most do find a satisfactory way to
20 accomplish this, capitalizing their quality time together in
21 joint days off.

22 Most casinos pay competitive wages with minor
23 differences. The hotels on the strip usually pay a little more
24 than do the ones downtown on the casino center and the
25 neighborhood casinos. Normally casinos who have union workers
26 in the hotel and restaurants have higher salaries and better

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1 benefits and health packages. However, some casinos that are
2 non-union in these departments do offer quite attractive and
3 competitive salaries and benefits.

4 I know that salaries offered here in combination
5 with the costs of housing and living in general are very good
6 for the employees. I don't know of any additional costs other
7 than the differences in some benefit packages. Some companies
8 pay for the entire health and pension plan, while others have a
9 shared payment plan with the employee. I am constantly being
10 told by new parishioners, many of whom have moved here from
11 other parts of the country, that they are living better than
12 ever before and have finally been able to afford to put money
13 down for a house; something they might not have been able to do
14 as soon or at all in other states.

15 There seems to be a real pride in casino workers
16 that they work for this particular casino. I believe there are
17 plenty of advancement opportunities in most areas. I can tell
18 story after story of persons who started out as maids, porters,
19 food servers, slot machine change persons, dealers of dice and
20 black jack, hotel registration clerks, and now are heads of
21 their shift, department managers, pit bosses, et cetera. Most
22 casinos prefer to advance within their own ranks and these
23 persons' experience and loyalty. Yes, when a new casino opens
24 many people do apply for employment there because they now have
25 the experience that a new casino needs. Naturally this leaves

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1 vacancies in the casinos they have left, vacancies that are
2 always filled quickly and adequately.

3 I believe it's a good town for minority employment
4 for many reasons. Casinos should operate under a
5 non-discrimination policy. There are so many jobs available
6 that those sheer numbers of opportunities make it possible for
7 anyone to apply and be hired. For a person who lacks the
8 skills, there are easily accessible training. Dealer schools
9 for the casino games, on-the-job training for many of the hotel
10 and restaurant positions, union-sponsored training and
11 placement. I believe we have one of the lowest unemployment
12 rates in the country. I'm convinced that almost anyone could
13 get a job in Las Vegas if that person truly wants to work.

14 Not being an insider in gambling anymore, I do not
15 know of discrimination in casinos because of their race,
16 religion, color, ethnic background, age or sex. I would think
17 that the percentage of minorities in the casino employment is
18 similar to the percentage of the population as a whole. Yes,
19 many persons must enter casino work at a low entry level
20 position because of limited skills and knowledge of gaming. I
21 do not believe, and I hope not, that it's tied to one's being
22 part of a minority group, but simply lack of skills at the time
23 of hire. As stated before, extensive training is available,
24 advancement is possible.

25 I don't think there are major differences between
26 management and labor's points of view concerning the overall

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1 need to serve the customer. The tourist, the convention
2 attendee, the gambler, the shopper, the diner, et cetera.
3 Everyone knows that the customer comes first and that Las Vegas'
4 future depends on the satisfaction of the customer and his or
5 her return to Las Vegas. Management, of course, also wants a
6 satisfied working force. As I stated earlier, I hear of great
7 satisfaction and pride from many different casino employees that
8 they are happy to work at such and such casino and are loyal to
9 that casino.

10 The Las Vegas industries of hotel and gambling have
11 the normal differences of opinion between labor and management,
12 especially at the time of contract negotiations. I belong to
13 the Las Vegas Interfaith Council for Worker Justice, similar to
14 other such organizations in other cities, to work with
15 management and employees to arrive at better and more just wage
16 levels, benefits, and working conditions. Our work has been
17 productive in many areas, but I don't believe our problems are
18 unique to the gaming industry but just part of the normal
19 tensions that exist in most places between management and labor.

20 In closing I would like to emphasize that Las Vegas
21 is a great place in which to have grown up, and an even greater
22 place today. I say greater today because there is more
23 opportunities today in Las Vegas for family and youth activities
24 than when I was growing up here. With our tremendous growth
25 comes more recreational, educational, spiritual and social
26 opportunities.

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1 As a priest I administer, as most priests do all
2 over the country, to the needs of families, couples, singles,
3 children, teens, young adults, et cetera. I do not find that
4 I'm forced to provide any special type of counseling to our
5 parishioners here due to the gambling industry. In fact,
6 growing up here and watching some of the young people grow up
7 today in Las Vegas, I know that gambling is not an attraction,
8 minimal at best. Perhaps with gambling in our backyard, it's
9 just not an attraction to us. It's just part of our town's
10 industry. I don't experience our young people craving to gamble
11 or getting fake ID's to sneak into casinos. Most people who do
12 gamble, locals do as a source of recreation just as in other
13 cities they would play Friday night poker, Wednesday night
14 church bingo, Saturday at the race track, or a Sunday afternoon
15 bridge game. I do very few counseling sessions for the gambling
16 addict. Yet more and more casinos are providing in-house
17 counseling or paying for the counseling of their own employees
18 who might have a gambling problem.

19 Nevada and Las Vegas are the national pioneers in
20 the casino gambling. Over the years we have worked out an
21 atmosphere for the tourist and the local. We have a strong and
22 effective Gaming Commissioner that's worked on all the
23 licensing, the regulating necessary. We should be the model for
24 all other areas of the country that might consider having
25 gambling. We seem to have worked out many of the problems --

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1 and they are there -- and are adequately prepared to handle
2 future problems.

3 I would recommend Las Vegas as an ideal place to
4 live for many reasons; the weather, the cost of living,
5 employment, possibility of advancement, an ever growing and good
6 school system, opportunities for recreation. Yes, Las Vegas,
7 even with its gambling industry, is a family town. Again, I
8 grew up here and I turned out pretty good.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you, Father Kenny. There
10 are obviously a lot of people here who agree with that
11 assessment of how you turned out.

12 FATHER KENNY: Thank you.

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