

1 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Maggie LeLeaux?

2 MS. LeLEAUX: Madam Chair and commissioners, good  
3 evening. I'm Maggie LeLeaux, the director of the Migration and  
4 Refugee Center of Catholic Social and Community Services under  
5 the auspices of the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi.

6 I'm here today to share with you the positive impact  
7 casino gaming has had on our program since its passage in 1992.  
8 Before the casinos, there were no available jobs for our refugees  
9 except in the seafood factories.

10 Although the seafood industry has been a tremendous  
11 opportunity to us and still is by allowing us to place refugees  
12 without English skills into immediate employment, it,  
13 unfortunately, requires long hours, offers no benefits, is only  
14 seasonal employment and depends on the success of a good shrimp  
15 season.

16 Since the approval of dockside gaming along the Gulf  
17 Coast, many opportunities have derived from this industry and we  
18 therefore have a broad range of opportunities to assist our  
19 refugee clients in finding gainful employment.

20 With changes in our economy like increases in  
21 insurance, medical, housing costs and decreases in job security,  
22 people need jobs with higher wages and good benefits. The gaming  
23 industry offers these opportunities.

24 For the past six years, we have been working with the  
25 casino industry in placing refugees in good paying jobs with  
26 secure benefits. Each year we assist 400 to 500 refugees in  
27 obtaining gainful employment, thus decreasing their dependence on  
28 the welfare system.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.

(202) 234-4433

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

www.nealrgross.com

1 We are proud to say that today there are only ten  
2 refugee families in the whole state of Mississippi who are  
3 currently in the 10-F program.

4 However, I do believe that there are pros and cons to  
5 gambling. People should be educated about this industry and  
6 understand that casinos should not be looked at as a get rich  
7 quick scheme but as a form of entertainment.

8 I also sympathize with those who have an addiction to  
9 gambling. Just a reminder that we should all be honest and admit  
10 that more positive outcomes have resulted from dockside gaming  
11 than negative.

12 Also, I believe that no one is forced to gamble, and  
13 if one does choose to do so, he or she must accept the  
14 responsibility for this choice, just like every choice we must  
15 make daily.

16 Thus, it has been a tremendous boon for our economy  
17 and the whole state of Mississippi and its people. I personally  
18 have watched this growth as when I arrived on the coast 32 years  
19 ago. My first thoughts were, what a beautiful place Biloxi could  
20 be with the right opportunities.

21 From the impact on my program, I believe the gaming  
22 industry is one of those right opportunities. We should all look  
23 back when the casinos were not part of our economy and thank God  
24 for this opportunity to give Mississippi a chance for a brighter  
25 future.

26 Thank you for allowing me this chance to share my  
27 views on this important issue.

28 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.

(202) 234-4433

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

www.nealrgross.com