

1 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Dr. Larry Drawdy?

2 MR. DRAWDY: Madam Chair, members of the commission,  
3 I am Larry Drawdy, superintendent of schools in Biloxi and I  
4 appreciate the opportunity to address the commission in regard to  
5 the impact of gaming on the local school district.

6 We are an advanced Level IV accredited school  
7 district, one of the largest school districts in the State of  
8 Mississippi, with a student enrollment of about 6300. We employ  
9 a licensed staff of 500 and a support staff of 450.

10 The district's budget for the current fiscal year is  
11 approximately \$47 million, with local funding coming of about 40  
12 percent, based on last year's figures.

13 Under legislation provided by the development of the  
14 gaming industry in the coast counties, a portion of the gaming  
15 revenue is dedicated to school districts in communities where  
16 gaming exists.

17 For the past five and a half years, the Biloxi school  
18 district has received approximately \$3.2 million per year in  
19 gaming receipts, representing 7.5 percent of the district's  
20 budget for the last fiscal year.

21 The millage rate for the Biloxi School District is  
22 the lowest in south Mississippi and there has been no local  
23 property tax increase for the school districts in the last eight  
24 years.

25 A major reason for the low millage rate and no  
26 requests for increases in local taxes to support the school  
27 district is the district's utilization of the gaming receipts to  
28 finance various school projects.

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1 It has been the intent of the board of education and  
2 the administration to utilize gaming revenue most directly for  
3 instructional and support services to increase instructional  
4 opportunities for students.

5 Gaming receipts have helped permit the district to  
6 provide extensive curricular opportunities among the broadest in  
7 this state and to employ 125 additional teachers above state  
8 requirements. Employment of nurses, counselors, special  
9 education assistants, librarians and personnel in special  
10 programs have been facilitated through gaming revenues.

11 We're often called upon, too, to provide special  
12 assistance for needs for special children and we employ  
13 additional personnel to meet those needs. In addition, the  
14 district has been able to use funds for renovation of science  
15 labs, foreign language laboratories, new buses, media technology,  
16 and other support and maintenance services.

17 We serve a community of approximately 78 to 80  
18 percent of our people that do not have children between the ages  
19 of 5 and 21, but we realize our community is growing and the  
20 number of children in our district will continue to increase.  
21 There is a vital need for long-range plans to be assured  
22 necessary support in order for these to be implemented.

23 Briefly, the impact of gaming on the Biloxi School  
24 District has been dramatic. In these ways I hope I've helped  
25 describe have been helpful to you. They've helped us throughout  
26 our community through the increase of jobs and improvement for  
27 our infrastructure and growth of our economy, and I believe it  
28 has been a remarkable success for our school district. Thank  
29 you.

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CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.

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