Thank you for your service to the Commission, and I would be glad to act as a state resource to you as you conduct this important work.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Jim, how do you pronounce your last name?

MR. ZEISLOFT: Zeisloft.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Zeisloft, Mr. Jim Zeisloft.

MR. ZEISLOFT: Zeisloft. I wanted to say thank you to the Commission for this opportunity to speak with you.

I am James Zeisloft, the Executive Director of United Methodist Witness in Pennsylvania. I represent some 565,000 United Methodists across the commonwealth as an advocate at the State House.

I wanted to speak to you about gambling as a moral issue, not a religious issue as the gaming interests might accuse me, but as a moral issue, nor can we agree with Senator Paul Simon that the question of gambling should not be a moral one; rather, it
should be practical one. Indeed, morality is practical.

And I'm not speaking of the kind of immorality that the gaming industry would accuse us of like Sigurese and Wuskie (phonetic) in "Wild, Wild Women."

Surely the nation is expected to be neither immoral nor amoral. Gambling is a moral issue for these reasons. Gambling is an economic issue. It does not produce money, but sucks it out of the economy, takes money out of the community and moves money from the losers to the stockholders, leaving on a percentage of the losers' money behind to pay for necessarily increased social, government, and infrastructure costs.

At the same time state and federal governments are stressing a work ethic in moving from welfare to work, by legislating approval of gambling they entice the poorest among us to take a chance on a win to improve their lives.

Third, though the gambling interests call it entertainment, they are forced to agree on a 21
year age limit, along with alcohol and tobacco use.

Why the regulations?

Four, gambling creates compulsive behavior and addiction, destroying lives and families. Estimates of the numbers of pathological gamblers in America range from two percent to six and a half percent of the population, and recent studies show that increasing the availability of gambling increases the prevalence of addiction. This is from a report of Attorney General Joseph Curran of Maryland.

It is one thing for a government to stand idly by while some small, but tragic percentage of its citizens destroy their lives. It is quite another to give gambling the status of an approved public good, of an ideal.

And finally, increased addictive gambling increases bankruptcies and crime. For example, robbery in Gulf Port, Mississippi increased 311 percent in the year following the opening of the first casino in May 1993, again, from the Curran report.

Gambling is a moral issue. No matter what our religion or no religion at all, if America is to
continue as a great leader of nations, we must
reassess our moral convictions and strengthen our
moral foundations.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Bruce Barron. I
understand Mr. Barron is not present.

Walt Barbee.

Jay Dee Hanson.

MR. HANSON: I'm here.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Good.

MR. HANSON: Good afternoon. I'm pleased
to present the position of the United Methodist
General Board of Church and Society, the National
Social Concerns Agency of the United Methodist Church.

We're pleased the Commission is holding
hearings on this most important issue.

I might stop just for a second. There has
been some discussion already about there being
religious issues and there being economic issues. An
essential element of protestant thought is you don't
divide life into religious sectors and secular
sectors.