Urge the conscience of our federal elected
officials to rise to the need for immediate gambling
regulation. The continued wholesome quality of life
of American towns like Ocean City, Maryland, as well
as other home towns throughout our great land, look to
you for help in making these much needed regulations
become a reality.

The residents and visitors of Ocean City,
Maryland, thank you for this opportunity, as well as
the opportunity we have to work together protecting
the quality of life of all Americans.

Thank you, and I'll see you on the
Boardwalk.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you.

Cheryl Lowell.

MS. LOWELL: Good afternoon,
Commissioners. My name is Cheryl Lowell. I'm
employed by Grand Casino, Gulfport, Mississippi. I'm
a lifelong resident of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The gaming industry has opened up career
opportunities for me that would not have been realized
otherwise. I worked in lower level management for
approximately ten years and was stagnant in my career field. I, like many other professionals, would have to either leave the state for better opportunities or accept the status quo.

Gaming has also given lots of career opportunities to thousands of individuals who were unemployed or under-employed prior to the casinos. I have had the opportunity of seeing lives transformed as a result of this industry. Individuals who were on welfare or under-employed, not only have they gained employment and income as a result of that, but they have gained self-esteem and pride.

Several of our employees have taken advantage of our GED programs, literacy programs, or our tuition reimbursement programs.

Prior to the gaming industry, thousands of Gulf Coast residents could not afford proper medical coverage. It was either not available through their employers or the cost was prohibitive. They now have adequate health insurance coverage and the peace of mind knowing that should they or a family member fall ill, they can unhesitantly seek medical attention.
As a result of gaming on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, the gaming industry has created 12,500 jobs with an annual payroll of $275 million. The unemployment rate fell from seven or 7.1 percent in 1992 to 4.6 percent in 1996. The retail sales revenue increased 58 percent over a four-year period, and the sales tax increased 60 percent over a four-year period.

I’m also very active in my community and have been prior to the gaming industries. I serve on the board of directors of the Nonprofit Board. I’m a board member of the American Business Women Association, vice president of the Gulfport chapter of the NAACP. I’m a mentor and volunteer with Junior Achievement in School Program.

Thank you for having this opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you.

Mr. Robert -- and how do you pronounce your last name?

MR. DETLEFSEN: Detlefsen, Madame Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Detlefsen.
MR. DETLEFSEN: Yes, I'm Robert Detlefsen, and I'm a Senior Research Fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a nonprofit, public policy research organization based here in Washington.

Madame Chairman, in your opening statement at this Commission's first meeting last June, you reminded your fellow Commissioners and the public that the Commission's job is to focus narrowly on the economic and sociological effects of legalized gambling. As for the moral issues raised by gambling, you expressed your hope that the religious community would begin a dialogue on that subject.

Congress was correct, of course, to limit the scope of this Commission's inquiry to empirical questions, but as it attempts to follow that mandate, this Commission runs the risk of overemphasizing those aspects of gambling that readily lend themselves to the quantitative research methodologies favored by modern social scientists.

Indeed, that tendency is already reflected in the Research Subcommittee's proposed study questions that were distributed at yesterday's