

1 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Paula Burns?

2 MS. BURNS: Madam Chair and members of the Committee,  
3 my name is Paula Burns and I'm Executive Assistant at the Arizona  
4 Council on Compulsive Gambling. I'm also an example of the  
5 fastest growing population of compulsive gamblers in Arizona,  
6 namely women in their fifties who have become addicted to casino  
7 slot machines or video poker available in Arizona only at casinos  
8 on Native American land.

9 A public school teacher all my life, I never dreamed  
10 that I would become a compulsive gambler, but while recovering  
11 from a bout of depression a new casino opened 15 minutes from my  
12 house, I discovered while at the slot machine all my pain went  
13 away. It became my drug of choice. Fortunately for me with the  
14 help of Don Hewland (ph) at the Arizona Council on Compulsive  
15 Gambling and a self-help recovery program, I am one of the  
16 fortunate who is in recovery.

17 I now work full time at the Arizona Council. Among  
18 my duties I answer 1-800 help line calls. In the last six months  
19 I have personally talked to 214 people for 10 to 40 minutes each,  
20 all of them fit the criteria for compulsive gambling addiction or  
21 have loved ones who did. Seventy-one percent of these callers  
22 were escape gamblers, people who reported to me that gambling had  
23 never been a problem to them before the casinos were opened on  
24 Indian land.

25 Among these calls in the last six months a 43-year  
26 old woman who in January left two her small children locked in  
27 her truck while she entered a casino to try to win enough to pay  
28 the installments on max'd out credit cards totalling \$77,000.00.

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1 She only gambled at local Indian casinos for seven months. She  
2 was arrested and convicted of child abuse. She called us from  
3 her hotel room when they released her from jail and we met her  
4 there and helped her to get into treatment.

5 A young mother of three small children whose husband  
6 had not come home for three days called. She did not know what  
7 to do. Days earlier the husband had threatened to harm her small  
8 stepson if his wife didn't leave him -- give him \$500.00 with  
9 which to gamble at a nearby casino. Later that day she learned  
10 he had pawned their truck and taken a bus to Laughlin. Four days  
11 later he returned penniless.

12 A 57-year old woman in charge of her mother's savings  
13 had spent it gambling and her mother didn't know it yet. A 64-  
14 year old woman who survived on her disability checks had declared  
15 bankruptcy due to her slot machine addiction. She had \$30.00 to  
16 live on for the next two weeks. In one day last week I had two  
17 college students who called each admitting to having spent part  
18 of their financial aid money gambling. One a 21-year old male at  
19 ASU had played poker for three days at a nearby casino losing  
20 \$2,000.00 of his college money. The other a 43-year old woman at  
21 a community college is hooked on slot machines.

22 Following the recent point shaving scandal at ASU,  
23 President Laddy Core (ph) claimed ASU to have education about  
24 compulsive gambling in their freshman success class, Uni 100. Our  
25 investigation proved that that is simply not true. After asking  
26 for our recommendations they have tabled plans to add compulsive  
27 gambling education to the curriculum for political reasons,

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1 according to Bryan Richardson, who has been in charge of the  
2 class.

3 All 214 calls were like this, story after story of  
4 insanity and chaos. There's an epidemic in our state and the  
5 point of contact for most of the recently afflicted are the  
6 casinos on Native American land. Thank you for listening.

7 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Thank you very much, Ms.  
8 Burns.

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