

1 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: We will begin with Mr. Allen.

2 MR. ALLEN: Well, thank you Chairwoman James and
3 Commissioners it's a pleasure to be here and I appreciate the
4 opportunity to be invited to speak to you. My name is Ron Allen
5 I'm the President for the National Congress of American Indians.
6 I'm also the Chairman for the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, it's a
7 small tribe located in western Washington.

8 Basically I come to you in behalf of what we call
9 NCAI and want to share with you a number of our views and
10 experiences with regard to the issues you're addressing.

11 I bring with me a number of years of experience. I
12 mean I've been the Chairman of my tribe for 21 years. I've been
13 the Executive Director administering all the different programs
14 that the tribe government runs for the last 18 years. And I have
15 been actively involved in a broad array of issues the Indian
16 country has had to address with regard to raising the welfare in
17 the interest of our communities, you know, in the areas of health
18 and education, the infra structure and economic development and
19 including gaming which the issue we're dealing with here.

20 You have asked me to come and talk about social
21 impacts. I have been trying to observe and note, you know, the
22 various issues and views that you have been trying to examine and
23 explore to understand Indian gaming within the Indian
24 communities.

25 And, you know, I when I -- before I come down here I
26 pulled off of the Internet off of your web site, you know, a
27 little paper that was written that was basically titled Native
28 American Gaming. As I scanned through it, as a person who has

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1 understood and read and tried to deal with the American Indian
2 law as it has weaved its way through the history of its
3 relationship with the United States it has brought to my
4 attention that it's really important that we work closely with
5 you first of all to make sure that we're working with the
6 fundamental precept of what the Indian tribes are.

7 I mean we need to continue to remind you that we are
8 governments and that we function as governments. And that even
9 though you'll see an array of competency in the governments from
10 large tribes to small tribes, to what we call sophisticated
11 tribes to less sophisticated tribes, and that is not necessarily
12 relevant to the size. It is relevant to how they have evolved
13 over the various years, and how they have improved their standing
14 with the United States.

15 And that is relative to a whole array of series of
16 laws and policies and the levels of sophistication of the
17 leadership of those various Indian nations. And it won't
18 substantially vary from Alaska to Florida. And it would surprise
19 you substantially, you know, in terms of what that level of
20 sophistication is, but the bottom line is we're governments.

21 And when we talk about the issue of gaming and the
22 application of gaming in the United States one of the things that
23 the tribes are trying to advance is the fact that we want to be
24 treated fairly.

25 Now it's interesting enough the concept fair has
26 various variations from whoever's interest they're looking from.
27 Our view clearly is as governments. We're looking at it from the

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1 perspective of the tribes as governments being able to advance
2 our agenda to elevate the welfare of our people.

3 So my topic here is to talk about social and cultural
4 impacts. What is going on with our communities. As the person
5 before me reported variances of size of tribes. From tribes that
6 may have a handful of people still within their body to the
7 largest of the Navajo Nation of well over 250,000. We have a
8 substantial differences of sizes and complexities and
9 compositions of communities. But the bottom line is that we
10 still are existing governments. The United States recognized
11 this in the Constitution and has reaffirmed that relationship
12 historically through statues and treaties and other legal
13 documents. Our job is to basically elevate the standing of our
14 community.

15 Now, we have many complications in elevating our
16 community capacities. And those obstacles are a large array of
17 issues. And I know you are never going to have enough time to go
18 over all the documents and all the issues that created these road
19 blocks for our communities to become what we call self
20 sufficient.

21 Because we do not essentially have tax bases.
22 Therefore, in order for us to become self sufficient and less
23 dependent on the federal government and other resources that we
24 have been dependent on for so many years clearly the business
25 resources is our tax base, there's no question about that.
26 Clearly that opportunity to generate new revenue is to diversify
27 our economy is a major issue for us and it is a new phenomena.

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1 It is true that in the last 5, 10 years that substantial progress
2 has been made.

3 Now while we're doing that realize other communities
4 as they change, because of the various development and various
5 things that go on in the various communities the changing of
6 their basic economic foundation whatever it is. It doesn't
7 matter what it is, timber industries or educational industries or
8 other forms of industries that reside there we have to adjust as
9 well.

10 And what essentially is happening is that some tribes
11 have a good advantage because of location, we know that's a
12 fundamental in business. But with tribes location is not an
13 option for us we are located where we are what we call our seated
14 territories. And those are the -- there's the limited options we
15 have. While we're dealing with these things we're dealing with
16 the elevation of our community needs and the preservation of our
17 culture and our traditional way of life.

18 Now it may surprise a lot of people that today those
19 cultural practices and traditions are still practiced
20 predominately. And many of them are lost and we will recognize
21 the fact that many of them are lost. But we are working very
22 vehemently in order to restore these -- the languages, the
23 religious practices, the traditions, the cultural ways of life.

24 And I would point out as we talk about the impacts of
25 gaming industry in our community, as been pointed out, 557 or 58
26 tribes recognized by the United States government. About 185,
27 86, 87 that are in gaming right now. So they're the ones that are
28 dealing with it right now with regard to gaming impact.

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1 But the majority of them, you know, have to deal with
2 gaming just like any other community has to deal with gaming.
3 The states have to deal with gaming and Nevada has to deal with
4 gaming, New Jersey and Louisiana and et cetera. They all have to
5 deal with gaming in its fatuous community. We too are coping
6 with it.

7 But we think we are coping with it quite well. We're
8 dealing with the compulsive gambling. Do we have compulsive
9 gambling problems? Yes. If you were going to say you don't have
10 it in the industry you're basically lying to yourself. We know
11 that and we have programs just like the industry has throughout
12 the United States that addresses those particular matters.

13 But one of the points that we wanted to make is that
14 as we move forward we see various forms of successes. The person
15 in front of me talked about, you know, as some of those casinos
16 have been very successful and they create jobs, which is a big
17 deal for many of our communities, that is an important objective.
18 But those jobs aren't always the right jobs for our people and
19 many of them don't want those kind of jobs.

20 So our agenda is while we're making those businesses
21 work is look for other kinds of ventures and other kinds of
22 businesses that will help them move on whether it's independently
23 or whether it's a part of a tribal business itself. And those
24 things are going on quite well.

25 But I also want to emphasize in terms of cultural
26 impact. Cultural impact with regard to gaming is the smallest of
27 our problems. Our community cultural impacts is because of the

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1 relationship between our culture and traditions and the non-
2 Indian cultures and traditions.

3 And all you've got to do is go to these reservation
4 and see small homes, you know, that are questionable against the
5 standards of America and you'll see the satellite system out
6 there. And though that little satellite system out there brings
7 all these cultural values in there and they rub up right against
8 these cultural community values of any communities.

9 So there are many kinds of influences in terms of
10 what happens to our communities. What we're trying to do is
11 generate the resources to address those issues. And if you don't
12 have those resources then you can't address those issues in terms
13 of how they impact your communities.

14 And it wouldn't matter whether it's strengthening
15 your economy by strengthening your infra structure, strengthening
16 your educational system so that they know what's going on.

17 So our objective here is to make sure that when you
18 report on what is going on we would argue that we think that by
19 enlarge if you measure us against mainstream America and how it's
20 handling its affairs we're doing fine. We're new, you know, in
21 this industry for all practical purposes. I don't know how many
22 years Nevada has been in it, but you know gaming has been an age
23 old cultural tradition, but not in the context you see it today.

24 But the fact is is that you don't see those monies
25 going out of our reservations as much as you may think. Because
26 what's happening is our communities are -- it's changing the
27 system so that the management has responsibilities to transfer

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1 these expertise to our people and moving them up in the white
2 collar positions in these industries.

3 And those industries that are moving in because it's
4 a good benefit and a good opportunity and they create good
5 partnerships now we're moving more and more of them out because
6 they're running our own ship and that is important to us. It is
7 important that we're managing our own affairs and keeping as much
8 of those resources that we're generating in our community, in our
9 economy. That is an important agenda for us.

10 Now, we hear numerous things that concern us, you
11 know, in terms of, you know, are we paying taxes? Well, we're
12 governments we're not paying taxes, but our people pay taxes. So
13 as governments we need to be treated like governments. But as
14 people we do pay the same kind of taxes and have the same kind of
15 burdens as mainstream American so that's not an issue for us in
16 our opinion.

17 Is there a fairness across America in Indian country?

18 Well, it's the luck of the draw. I mean is there
19 fairness with Bill Gates versus his competitors? You know, if
20 you get yourself in a good position, you're in the right
21 location, the right resources are available, you have an edge
22 that's all there is to it.

23 So Indian country looked at the Pequot's and the
24 Shakopee's and the Mille Lacs and the Oneida's and Gila River's
25 and those folks that are doing well and we say right on. That is
26 a good thing for those guys because there is nothing wrong with
27 rich Indians, there's nothing wrong with rich non-Indians.

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1 So that our point is that let's be fair. Let's use
2 the same standards with Indians as you do non-Indians and let's
3 be respectful of us as government.

4 So I see my time is up and unfortunately, you know,
5 I can only go over the mountain tops. We want to work with you.
6 We want to cause you to understand what we're all about and what
7 we're trying to do. What has happened with the evolution of and
8 the growth of tribal governments over the last 20 years
9 particularly and where we think we're going in the 21st century.
10 Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Thank you very much Mr. Allen.
12 If you have additional written testimony please feel free to
13 submit it, it will be included in the record.

14 MR. ALLEN: We appreciate it.

15 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: And at the end of the session
16 there may be an opportunity to revisit some of your additional
17 points in terms of questions and answers.

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