

MONSIGNOR JACK EGAN

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3 MSGR. EGAN: For the record I'd like to remind the
4 Honorable Mr. Witt that Dubuque is not the same as Chicago, and
5 Chicago is not the same as Dubuque.

6 I'm going to talk to you about Chicago and its
7 flirtation with casino gambling. I've been concerned about
8 gambling for the past 30 years. I've read how gambler
9 demographics break out. The glittering few occupy the top
10 sliver. We know the opposite end of gambling's demographics,
11 too, terrorized, exhausted, chasing their losses, converting
12 plastic into more cash at the ATM, leaving babies to bake in
13 closed up cars, dropping Social Security checks into slots
14 quarter by quarter, betting the rent or any money they can score
15 any way, that the next wager will get them back up to zero and
16 mouthing the prayer that diagnoses an addict, "God, help me get
17 out of this and I'll never do it again."

18 Gambling towns break down the same way. The
19 glittering town top is Las Vegas, dazzling, detached in control,
20 some call it a town with a single industry focus. Beneath the
21 relentless welcome lies a hard nosed network of security, down to
22 the penny forecasting, meticulous systems to camouflage the mob,
23 murders, prostitution, robberies, rapes, suicides, all the crimes
24 that always accompany gambling and might stand in the way of the
25 single municipal mission to separate visitors from their cash.

26 On the other end are moribund spots like Atlantic
27 City, Gary and now Detroit, or aging ailing riverboat towns with
28 little left to lose, or the dirt road, dirt floor, dirt poor
29 pockets of hopelessness like our Indian reservations. Chicago

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1 was almost one of them a few years back. Our economy was bad,
2 job market worse, public education deteriorating, crime
3 escalating, the Loop was becoming uninhabitable, gangs were
4 bringing crime into bungalow neighborhoods. We were losing self-
5 confidence and hope.

6 When the magi from the desert promised civic
7 renaissance, family entertainment, jobs, tourists and cash, our
8 city fathers were set to sign up, until the Chicago River sprung
9 a leak and flooded the Loop, tabling the project. I like to
10 think it was providential and since then two things happened.

11 One, all our fears proved out in reality for towns
12 that took the bait, we said gambling never changes its stripes
13 and we were right. Two, Chicago revived without surrendering its
14 character, integrity and identity to gambling. Our economy came
15 back to life, jobs are plentiful, tourists are having a grand
16 time with us, Chicago is looking and working like the world class
17 city we are.

18 It's a city of neighborhoods, neither single minded
19 nor desperate enough to risk home and family by laying a dicey
20 bet on a dream. We're not cool like James Bond; we're not single
21 minded like Las Vegas; and we're nowhere near as frantic as
22 riverboat towns and Indian reservations. And that's precisely my
23 point.

24 Chicago, first and foremost, is a real home town.
25 While you're here, I hope you'll have time to notice, not only
26 our breathtaking lake front and skyline, our extraordinary
27 shopping and dining, our spot at the heart of the nation's
28 transportation and financial markets, our parks and forest
29 preserves, our newly renovated and reclaimed Loop, also our crime

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1 rate dropping, public schools improving, our employment rate at
2 an all-time high, our new construction, renovation, our clean and
3 healthy new face, our vibrant beauty, our energy, our new river
4 walks and Navy Pier, the way Chicagoans use and enjoy their home
5 town. There's still an appetite for gambling among some
6 Chicagoans. In fact, there are civic leaders who still envy the
7 streams of cars that head west, north, south and east to gamble
8 in other people's casinos nearby and to leave their tax revenues
9 in someone else's coffers.

10 I'd like to remind our leadership when the gambling
11 day is done, Chicago can come back to the comfort of reality and
12 diversity of home. I'd like to remind them that casino gambling,
13 whether land based or riverboat, changes a community's character
14 forever. It's a bell that can never be unrung. Chicago still
15 watches from a distance as legalized gambling cannibalizes its
16 own from coast to coast.

17 And I'd like to remind them that Chicago is still
18 only better. I hope you will feel welcome here in Chicago.
19 Enjoy our home town. Explore it. Chicago is great town. May I
20 say about casino gambling, we don't need it and if a referendum
21 we were offered, we would not want it. Thank you very much.

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