

1 MS. LORI CALLAHAN

2
3 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Lori Callahan.4 MS. CALLAHAN: My name is Lori Callahan. Take a
5 look, ladies and gentlemen. What do you see when you look at me?
6 I have dark hair, brown eyes, I still have all my original teeth.
7 But what you can't see is that I'm hypoglycemic; I have lumbar
8 disc disease and sometimes walk with a cane. I have a pre-
9 cancerous disease called barrick's esophagus. I have five
10 children. I make no excuses, I offer no apologies; they are mine
11 and you can't have them.12 The one thing, though, that I want you to remember
13 about me is that I am every Illinois taxpayer's worst nightmare.
14 Tell your neighbors, call your friends, hide the chips and pop
15 because no matter how much time goes by, no matter how hard I
16 work, no matter how much money I make, I am and forever will be
17 labeled a welfare mother. Don't be shocked, don't be frightened,
18 don't be upset and don't be appalled but never, ever forget my
19 face or my story because this is the face of welfare. I am the
20 working poor.21 When I found out that the casino in Rock Island hired
22 mostly local people and promoted from within, I applied. I
23 started out as a cashier. It paid decent for the time, between
24 six and seven dollars an hour. When I voiced an interest in
25 learning another job, Casino Rock Island said do it. Go to
26 school after work or on your days off. We have a teacher at the
27 training center. It's free. So I went.28 I learned dice, I learned blackjack, I learned
29 roulette, I learned it all for free. No charge. If you think**NEAL R. GROSS**COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
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1 that casino jobs don't pay, if you think they can't help change a
2 life or situation, you are mistaken. On a bad week I take home
3 \$9 an hour, on a good week 13, an average week is somewhere in
4 between. But more importantly I thank my job for keeping me
5 alive. I now have decent medical insurance, not free, but
6 affordable. Nothing is free. Believe me, I have paid the price
7 for having been in the welfare system.

8 Nurses and doctors looked at my medical card, decided
9 I must be there only for drugs and left me untreated for so long
10 that I now have a disease that will ultimately be the cause of my
11 death, a disease that could have been prevented, if not for the
12 stigma attached to a single piece of paper. You as a group need
13 to see that there is much more involved here than cards and dice,
14 bells and whistles, chips and tokens, profit and loss.

15 Please don't forget my face, my name. Don't forget
16 that I was once a welfare mother. Don't forget that my life is
17 now changed. Don't forget that I still have a life because I
18 work on a riverboat casino. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.

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