

1 THE HONORABLE DONALD SANDIDGE, MAYOR, ALTON, IL

2
3 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Our fourth mayor is the Mayor of
4 Alton, Illinois Donald Sandidge. Good morning, Mayor.

5 MAYOR SANDIDGE: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.
6 Thank you very much for allowing me to come to testify.

7 We are a medium size city on the Mississippi River,
8 just above the city of St. Louis. We were the first riverboat in
9 the state of Illinois in October, 1991. They came to the city of
10 Alton. Prior to that the city had been an industrial community,
11 but industry was closing, businesses were moving out, the support
12 businesses were leaving. Since the boat has come to town things
13 have changed drastically.

14 Since the Alton Belle arrived in the city of Alton we
15 have received \$34,347,489 of revenue and they have become the
16 fourth largest employer in our community. With the revenue the
17 city has begun a revitalization program to improve the
18 infrastructure and general appearance of the community. \$5
19 million has been spent on street improvements and this year we're
20 doing another million or two on street improvements; 4.5 million
21 on capital expenditures, police cars, fire trucks, trucks for the
22 parks department, public works; \$2 million on a new marina; \$2
23 million on a riverfront development. In addition, we now have
24 \$3.5 million operating reserve fund we've never had in the past
25 and we have \$4 million in reserve to build a new police
26 department that's in the planning stages at this time.

27 We're also improving our City Hall with a \$2.5
28 million renovation. We're using less than \$1 million of the

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1 gaming money for our day to day operation. And we hope to become
2 less dependent on that as our revenues increase.

3 The annual payroll for the Alton Belle is
4 \$20,844,934, and that rolls over about six times in the region.
5 We have 93.6 percent of the employees reside in the state of
6 Illinois. New business is moving to town. They're bringing in
7 additional jobs. For the first time in recent history, the city
8 business district is growing. Vacant buildings are now occupied.

9 The critics of riverboat gambling projected increases
10 of crime, prostitution and organized crime activities. As a
11 former police chief, I was concerned about those projections, but
12 none of those have occurred. In fact, that is probably a crime-
13 free area around the Belle. We've been able to increase our
14 police department by 12 people and in addition, the Alton Belle
15 casino has security staff.

16 Our State's Attorney Bill Haine had commented that
17 the downtown area is one of the safest areas in Madison County.
18 In fact, to quote Bill, "there's been absolutely no crime problem
19 occurring in Madison County which has resulted from the operation
20 of the Alton Belle casino on the Alton Illinois riverfront."

21 The Alton fire chief Don Dugan has commented about
22 the assistance given to the fire department by the emergency
23 people from the Alton Belle. In fact, last Sunday, we are the
24 home of the Nova super bridge that was on television and we had a
25 jumper from the bridge, not gambling related, and the Alton Belle
26 casino put their emergency people on the boats and retrieved him
27 from the water and saved his life.

28 The Alton Belle has also contributed to the
29 development of the marina, the riverfront park as well as the

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1 cost design for those improvements. This is over \$1 million.
2 The Alton Township supervisor has also stated that not one client
3 has come to his office for assistance due to gambling problems.

4 In conclusion the city of Alton is extremely
5 satisfied with the results of having the Alton Belle casino in
6 our community. It is a major asset and would be difficult to
7 replace. We are using the proceeds from the Belle to improve our
8 infrastructure and general appearance of our community. The
9 Alton Belle casino has been a good neighbor and we look forward
10 to many more years of partnership. Thank you very much.

11 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.

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