CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Mr. Wilson, welcome.

MR. WILSON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. As introduction to what I'm about to speak about, of course I found out that for the first time in my life, I totally agree with a Democrat and that's Mayor Jones. So I appreciate that she may have made a Democrat out of a Republican.

I'm speaking today on the problems of gaming in convenience stores and such, and its the availability. Many years ago after I had moved here I had seen that I probably had this problem all my life. I came from the State of Missouri 18 years ago. The introduction into this society here was devastating for me. It would have been devastating back in Missouri had the availability been there. I was not at that time fortunate enough to be able to join into the high stakes gambling that was going on at the bowling alley with business owners or this type of thing.

Availability would have caused me at that time to cross over the line. When I came to Las Vegas, the availability was on every street corner basically. I hadn't really thought a lot about the convenience gambling until the impact study said that was one area that I should speak about. In one square mile of which I live between Buffalo, Durango, Charleston and Sahara, I went out last week and counted 199 video machines within businesses. Right now, Sahara is still building so I don't know how many will end up there.
Charleston will probably still be building. The availability to someone such as me, I believe is a major factor in creating the kind of problems that I have created for my family and for myself through our life. There are very few times I've been on the strip in the 18 years to gamble. Primarily it has been convenience stores or a casino located very close to me. It is inconvenient to go to one on the strip when you live five, six, seven miles away.

The local convenience stores offer an easy access. Back in Missouri -- I know, Mr. Higgins spoke about being akin to a bar or something like this. A pack of cigarettes back in Missouri never cost me three or $400.00, okay. So it's a little bit different back there. Had the video machines or poker machines been in there then I'm sure it would have cost me two or 300 or $500.00 for a pack of cigarettes. My problem is I went around in my area and talked to people who actually work in the business in the convenience stores and grocery stores. They are also against this, not necessarily being in the stores but where they are located.

As I was told by one lady last week who works the slot machines or video machines at one of the grocery stores in my area, "Why do they have pornography in the back of the video store? Because you don't want your children to see it when you walk in". She said, "Why should that theory be any different with the poker machines in the front of the store when you walk
through to get your groceries with your children"? I hadn't
thought of that concept but it's very true.

We don't do that with pornography. We hide
everything basically from our children because they are not
adults, but yet in gaming we do not do that. I am not against
nor have I ever been against gambling in the State of Nevada.
We came out here from the Midwest many years ago because this
was the place to come if you were a Baptist and went to church
every Sunday but for a two or three-day fling, you got to do
what you wanted to do and then go back home and nobody knew
about it.

What I am against is spreading throughout the
country, and this is nothing new with me, I've been through this
for the last 10 years. What has amazed me is being a former
Missouri boy, the Missouri person was always a very conservative
hard-headed individual but yet how easily $10 million against
$150,000.00 last week convinced the people in Missouri to allow
the boats there. I consider this my home but my heart is still
back where I'm from.

I have a story of a gentleman who came to Las Vegas
a few years ago, quite a few years ago now, who had called the
suicide hotline here. I actually had my phone number listed
with an organization called HELP. They apparently could get no
one at the suicide hotline to help this gentleman. He was at a
casino down on Boulder Highway. He was ready to kill himself
and I went down to pick him up. He had not been a compulsive
gambling type individual and I don't use the word pathological
because to me that's eventually going to cast the burden on
society as far as paying for my medical care.

I believe I'm responsible so I still call it
compulsive gambling. He had threatened to end his life. He was
a business man out of the State of Wyoming who had a restaurant
at the airport, also had a restaurant downtown in his sixties.
He wasn't a bum on the street. He was a well-organized
business man. Somehow he had gotten involved in going to South
Dakota when they opened up, I believe it was, gaming, a 110-mile
drive.

Pretty soon that wasn't good enough for him because
Vegas is the big city. That's the bright lights and that's how
I see this spreading throughout the country. We are opening up
-- it's like when I was a young man and went into a tavern, a
local tavern, I couldn't drink, but I was allowed to go in there
and play the pinball machines. When I got old enough to drink,
that's where I went to drink. I was accustomed to that.

The spread of gaming throughout the country is going
to probably bring people here but it's also creating problems in
other societies that are not prepared for it as I believe Doctor
Quinn spoke on. I don't believe you'll ever prepare all the
states, all the cities for this type of gaming for the results
that can happen from it. Las Vegas is different.

Mr. Bible, I read about him many times in the
newspaper. I respect him. We have apparently a system here
that has worked for years but that doesn't mean that there
shouldn't be changes such as the convenience stores, the grocery
stores. I -- this gentleman from Wyoming had 20 some odd credit
cards with him when he got out here. Every one of them were
max'd out. He had probably a $25,000.00 van. We took it down
to Tom Calvert, I believe it was, at night and left it because
he couldn't pay the bills for it.

He lost both restaurants, lost everything that he
had worked hard for all of his life. He was -- the last time I
consulted with him, he was working in a 7-11 sweeping the floor.
These are the types of things that happen to individuals. I was
going to speak about my life but my life is still going on. I
would like to close with something that may be termed as a shock
tactic but it's in actuality things that can happen with
individuals.

This is a note written 3/4/96. On one side of the
page is the Gamblers Anonymous phone number. At the bottom,
"This is a true and accurate copy of this facsimile document
received by this office, Clark County Coroner Medical
Examination". "I've been a failure most of my life. I'd been
warned by all my family members to stop gambling. I keep on
saying yes but I keep on gambling and never win. All of my
paychecks and whatever I win it goes back in. I'm so far back in
all of my payments not counting the IRS, I can't keep this up.

I'm a loser and there's nothing I can do about it.

People like me don't deserve to live. All I do is make everyone
suffer including myself. It's time to put a stop to it", and he
did at Lake Mead on that day. He blew his brains out. What I
want to see out of this gaming commission is some compassion,
some thought about individuals such as this individual because
there is a problem among us that is not being -- we're not being
able to handle among ourselves and availability is a primary
problem.

I want to thank the Commission for this opportunity.
I want to apologize for being among doctors and PhD's and stuff
and not really -- and being very nervous, but I hope that my
thoughts on compassion and love and direction for the gaming
industry will take hold and that people throughout the country
will see this is not the panacea that we think it is. Thank
you.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

(Appause)

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And, indeed, no apologies are
necessary. Your testimony was very eloquent and very relevant
and very important to the work of this Commission.