CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Ms. Carlton.

MS. CARLTON: Thank you. Good afternoon, Commissioners. My name is Maggie Carlton, and I'm a newly elected member of the Nevada State Senate. I'm very pleased to be here today because my husband, Merit, and our two daughters, Lucy and Gracie, make up one of the Las Vegas families that has achieved the middle class dream that is disappearing in many parts of the country today.

Las Vegas is one of the few places in our country where a waitress can make enough money to own a home, and that's not just true of me, it's true of the single parents that I know also. Because I have a good union job, working for an enlightened and progressive company, my husband and I are able to save so that we can send our children to college. Because I have good union health benefits, we have the peace of mind that knows that if we should have a medical emergency it will not destroy our financial security. And because I am a union waitress, I don't have to work two jobs and I can be the kind of parent that I want to be. I'm active in the Parents Advisory Committee, I'm a Girl Scout leader, and I teach Sunday school. I can also be the type of citizen that I've always wanted to be and give something back to our community. That's why I ran for the State Senate.

Unfortunately, not everyone in our country can say these things about their jobs. Not every family can afford to buy a home. Not all parents can send their children to college.
Many people don't have the same security that my husband and daughters have. I know because our family hasn't always lived here in Las Vegas. We lived in Missouri for a long time before coming here. My husband works as a state parole officer, and from the time I was 16 years old I worked in restaurants for minimum wage or less. We worked hard and we managed to get by. I sometimes had to work two jobs in order to earn a full-time income, but no matter how hard we worked, we could never have provided for our family the way we can here in Las Vegas.

So when Merit was offered a job here, we jumped at the opportunity, and I got a job waitressing at a union casino, the Treasure Island owned by Mirage Resorts when it opened five years ago. Like a lot of other families who come to Las Vegas, we moved here because it's one of the few cities in our county, maybe the only one, where opportunity is still abundant. Since we came here just eight years ago the population of Clark County has increased by nearly half a million people. All those people came here looking for opportunity, and there would be no opportunity in Las Vegas without gaming.

I'm not saying that we don't have problems here. With so many new people we've had our growing pains. Like a lot of other cities, we have to improve our schools, crack down on gangs, and make sure that we have safe drinking water for our future. I welcome the opportunity to face these problems, and I wouldn't have that opportunity without a good union job in the gaming industry.
Because it's also important for you to understand that not everyone in Las Vegas has a good job like I do, just a few miles from here there are neighborhood casinos where the maids can't afford health insurance for their families. Some casinos only let their maids work part time so they won't ever qualify for benefits, and in subcontracted restaurants right here on the strip there are dishwashers who rely on government assistance to feed their children. The difference between these dead-end jobs and a good job like my own is our union.

I'm sure you've read what all those bright green t-shirts say. Union and gaming together for a better life. We need gaming in Las Vegas because gaming means opportunity. And for respect, security, and the quality of life we need our union.

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak today.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you. In the interest of time and fairness, I'm going to ask that we reserve the applause. I want to make sure that we move through and give everyone an opportunity. But you certainly are deserving of congratulations on your recent political victory, and thank you so much for being here.