CHAIRMAN JAMES: Mr. Webster Franklin?

MR. FRANKLIN: Madam Chairman, members of the commission, my name is Webster Franklin. I currently serve as executive director of the Tunica, Mississippi Convention and Visitors Bureau. I'm a lifelong native of the Mississippi Delta, which is the geographic region in which Tunica County is currently located.

The gaming industry arrived in Tunica in October 1992 and before that the mechanization of the farming industry had displaced thousands and thousands of workers in our area. Those workers moved to the bigger cities throughout the country, into Memphis and Chicago, and basically up the Mississippi River.

Since the gaming industry's arrival in Tunica, over 16,000 new jobs have been created in a community that only has 9,000 residents. 16,000 jobs in a community with 9,000 residents -- it's an amazing statistic and story. Our unemployment rate, which was 26.2 percent in January 1992, today is at 4.9 percent.

But I'm not here to tell you more statistics about Tunica. I'm here to talk about Ms. Rosie Barnes. Rosie is currently employed at the Treasure Town Inn, a local hotel in Tunica that is a spin-off industry of the gaming industry.

Rosie and her husband have lived in Tunica all their lives and six years ago they were on all Federal programs that were needed to live. Rosie and her husband have since, since her employment, have since bought a new truck for their family.

Rosie has also bought a trailer in the first two years of her employment within the hospitality industry. Since
then, she has also purchased land for the price of $10,000.

Rosie Barnes is living the American dream.

When I asked Rosie what her goal was over the next five years, she told me, Webster, I'm going to build a house on that land that I bought with the opportunity that I have now. Rosie is, in fact, living the American dream and some 5,000 others in Tunica County in the labor force are doing the same.

Rosie unfortunately can't be with us today because Rosie is at home at work, earning her money so she can build her home.

As my job at tourism in Tunica County, we now see over 50,000 visitors per day come to our area. I would like to personally invite each of you to come and see the things that you've heard so much about Tunica today from our country administrator, our mayor and others, to see firsthand the dramatic effect that the gaming industry has brought to our area.

Thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.