CHAIRMAN JAMES: Bob Mahoney. Courtney's next.

Thank you, Bob.

MR. MAHONEY: Anyway, that's a hard act to follow.

Thank you. But anyway, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Bob Mahoney. I'm a native of Biloxi, Mississippi. My family owns and operates Mary Mahoney's Old French House Restaurant. We began our business some 35 years ago.

My appearance here is to explain the impact that legalized gaming has had on our business during the past six years. We have experienced the good, the bad and the new Mississippi miracle, and believe me, it's been a miracle for the working and the business people of the surrounding area.

The good times were when all the statewide conventions were coming to the coast for their annual convention. But in the late 1980s, because of the deteriorating conditions of our major hotels, of which three were in bankruptcy and the other one didn't care, the bad times began.

We lost the Mississippi Bar Association, the Mississippi Automobile Dealers, the Mississippi Bankers, the Mississippi Medical Associations and many more conventions. What we had to offer was not first-class. We were a tourist town without tourists.

So now the Mississippi miracle has occurred with the legalization of casino gaming. I would like to mention that our casinos are extremely well operated, good corporate citizens, and our gaming commission beyond reproach. We are very proud of this industry that now enhances our coast and the conventions are back.
It may interest you to know that casinos have created a positive impact on our business, which is up substantially. The casinos have created jobs for the average person that lift their quality of life with hourly wages, in a lot of instance, from 14 to $18 an hour range, plus all employees receive medical benefits.

Contrary to what you hear that casinos don't produce anything, well, let me tell you they do, as does Yankee Stadium, the L.A. Forum, Wrigley Field, Madison Square Garden, Six Flags, Disneyworld and the Superdome and other people places. They produce good times.

A priest friend of mine once told me that nothing God created is sinful, only the abuse. I would like to thank you for coming to Biloxi so we can share our Mississippi miracle with you.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Mahoney.

MR. MAHONEY: Thank you.