CHAIRMAN JAMES: Dr. Larry Drawdy?

MR. DRAWDY: Madam Chair, members of the commission,
I am Larry Drawdy, superintendent of schools in Biloxi and I
appreciate the opportunity to address the commission in regard to
the impact of gaming on the local school district.

We are an advanced Level IV accredited school
district, one of the largest school districts in the State of
Mississippi, with a student enrollment of about 6300. We employ
a licensed staff of 500 and a support staff of 450.

The district's budget for the current fiscal year is
approximately $47 million, with local funding coming of about 40
percent, based on last year's figures.

Under legislation provided by the development of the
gaming industry in the coast counties, a portion of the gaming
revenue is dedicated to school districts in communities where
gaming exists.

For the past five and a half years, the Biloxi school
district has received approximately $3.2 million per year in
gaming receipts, representing 7.5 percent of the district's
budget for the last fiscal year.

The millage rate for the Biloxi School District is
the lowest in south Mississippi and there has been no local
property tax increase for the school districts in the last eight
years.

A major reason for the low millage rate and no
requests for increases in local taxes to support the school
district is the district's utilization of the gaming receipts to
finance various school projects.
It has been the intent of the board of education and the administration to utilize gaming revenue most directly for instructional and support services to increase instructional opportunities for students.

Gaming receipts have helped permit the district to provide extensive curricular opportunities among the broadest in this state and to employ 125 additional teachers above state requirements. Employment of nurses, counselors, special education assistants, librarians and personnel in special programs have been facilitated through gaming revenues.

We're often called upon, too, to provide special assistance for needs for special children and we employ additional personnel to meet those needs. In addition, the district has been able to use funds for renovation of science labs, foreign language laboratories, new buses, media technology, and other support and maintenance services.

We serve a community of approximately 78 to 80 percent of our people that do not have children between the ages of 5 and 21, but we realize our community is growing and the number of children in our district will continue to increase. There is a vital need for long-range plans to be assured necessary support in order for these to be implemented.

Briefly, the impact of gaming on the Biloxi School District has been dramatic. In these ways I hope I've helped describe have been helpful to you. They've helped us throughout our community through the increase of jobs and improvement for our infrastructure and growth of our economy, and I believe it has been a remarkable success for our school district. Thank you.
CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.