COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Coral Wyche?
(No response.)

COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Dennis Howard?
(No response.)

COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Butch Tam?
(No response.)

COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Frances Grubaugh?
(No response.)

COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Gee, we did good to start.

Bill Biossat? I'm sorry if I butchered your name, sir. Thank you for being here, particularly today.

MR. BIOSSAT: Thank you very much. Actually, I enjoyed the Commission meeting in Biloxi yesterday, and I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the Commission for allowing me to speak.

My name is William Biossat. I'm a 26-year law enforcement veteran, 23 years with the Louisiana State Police, ten of those years was with the Organized Crime Intelligence Division; also, I was director of gaming enforcement for the state police, the first deputy director of the Attorney General's Office Gaming Division in Louisiana, and started up that Gaming Division; as well as the first executive director of the Riverboat Gaming Commission.

I say that in that I think that my background gives me maybe some insight on illegal gambling, the casino gaming that may be somewhat different than others may be. My current position, I'm corporate director of Regulatory Relations for Casino American; we own three of the riverboats here in...
Louisiana, and we're proud to be the largest riverboat gaming operator in the state.

That being said -- and I'm not going to take up a lot of your time because I know you've had a long couple of days and the weather is what it is -- but I did want to make a few comments.

The State of Louisiana of course does have an extensive background, long-term background with organized crime involvement; however, in the riverboat gaming industry or the legal gaming industry in this state, the Louisiana State Police does extensive background and suitability investigations on gaming operators, the employees of the riverboats, and video poker entities. Also, there was a comment made today, or a question, I think, by Mr. deBueys about the vendors or that organized crime may try to infiltrate casino gaming through being vendors, but our vendors are also subjected to background investigations by the Louisiana State Police, and they give us a printout on who is permitted and who is not, and those are the entities that we in fact do business with.

In my opinion, based on my background in law enforcement and as a gaming regulator, and from being in the gaming industry, is the biggest threat to the public health, safety and welfare in this state, and probably in the country, is from illegal gambling which is unlicensed, unregulated and untaxed.

In 1989 when I was with the Louisiana State Police Organized Crime Intelligence Section and a gaming regulator, we conducted raids on illegal bookmaking operations in this state in
a one-year period of time, and through records seized it was
documented that there was over a billion dollars a year being
waged in illegal sports bets in this state alone.

Also, we did extensive investigations and raids on
other illegal forms of gambling which led to some of the
testimony that I provided to the Louisiana Legislature because
what I saw was that there were certain forms of gambling that
could not be controlled and for it to be regulated, taxed would
be better for the public health, safety and welfare than leaving
it to go on its own.

There was some questions that came up today regarding
why nothing is done about the illegal gambling, and in this state
the problems were that there were virtually no criminal
penalties, as in a $250 fine and six months in jail, and if
someone is doing a million dollars in illegal sports book in a
month, then the idea that you're going to hurt them with a $250
fine is certainly ludicrous.

And there's been almost no prosecution from the
courts in illegal gambling enforcement over the years, and that
kind of led to my idea and beliefs that legalization and
regulation of gambling was probably better than leaving things
the way they were with what we had to deal with at that time.

The casinos, I have found in this state, and probably
nationally, are very compliance oriented. They go to great
lengths to ensure that they comply with the law, not only the
spirit but intent of the law, and they go to great lengths to
hire minorities and women. In fact, in this state it's been a
great asset to women and minorities because they have been in
either much lower paying jobs or unemployed and now they in fact
do have decent, well-paying jobs and health insurance and the
things that go with that.

I know I've probably gone over the three minutes. I
did want to make those few comments and I did give the written
comments and I would hope that you do take the time to look at
them because I do feel like with my background, my perspective is
maybe different than some that you may have heard. Thank you
very much.

COMMISSIONER WILHELM: I assure you that we will look
at the written submission and it will be shared with the other
commissioners. Thank you very much, Mr. Biossat, appreciate your
being here.