COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Sharon LaFuria?
(No response.)
COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Trudy Piraro?
(No response.)
COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Patricia Vanicore?
(No response.)
COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Preston Friedley? And again,
I hope I didn't butcher your name, sir.
MR. FRIEDLEY: No. You did very well.
I'm Preston Friedley. I'm the president of the
Convention and Tourist Bureau for Shreveport and Bossier City;
I've had that position for about 15 years. I've submitted my
statement in writing but I'll read it very quickly for you from
our community's point of view. And of course, I know Don Pierson
submitted a document to you that I know that you'll have an
opportunity to review that really is much more detailed than any
information we'll share with you in this three-minute time frame.
The addition of casinos to Bossier City and
Shreveport, Louisiana has created a tremendous economic boost to
our area. The positive impact has manifested itself through the
additional jobs, the developments across our area, the added tax
dollars, complete riverfront revitalization, and the development
of our community as a tourist destination.
The overall impact has allowed our area to invest in
many long-term projects for the overall betterment of our
community. The casino tax revenues that we have generated have
helped our city improve its infrastructure, have been the
catalyst to downtown revitalization, have developed a new
festival site on our riverfront, and have helped create a new 
Sciport Discovery Center which is a 67,000 square foot science 
center with an IMAX dome theater.

We currently have plans for the construction of a new 
14,700-seat arena and an upgraded and improved convention center, 
plus additional further riverfront improvements in our community 
utilizing the casino revenues.

The casinos have been a catalyst for the development 
across our entire community, as well as proving to be good 
corporate citizens through their sponsorships and donations.

Since the addition of casinos to our area, we've 
experienced tremendous growth, including: a new shopping 
center -- the first time we've developed a new shopping center in 
our community in over ten years; new restaurants to the tune of 
opening a restaurant every other week in our community; new 
hotels; and additional department stores.

Shreveport-Bossier hotel room sales, for example, has 
recently doubled since the addition of the casinos coming into our 
market, increasing from $32 million in 1993 to over $60 million 
in 1997. This is also an indication of the number of day 
trippers that have come into our community which has nearly 
doubled during that time period. Those visitors have added 
additional sales to our food industry, transportation, shopping, 
and the increased economic impact has helped generate additional 
sales tax revenues from these visitors.

All of those positive improvements have allowed other 
aspects of our community to flourish. We've attracted many 
regional and national conventions to our community, as well as
special events because of the casinos and their entertainment, the hotels and the additional facilities.

The awareness of Shreveport-Bossier now as a tourism destination positively correlates a great deal by the casinos as what they have meant to us as attractions, the many fine accommodations, the facilities they offer, and their continued addition to the gaming market in our community.

We have found that the more gaming attractions that Shreveport-Bossier offers, as well as a better quality tourism product all around, the wider our overall market base has grown. In turn, this has allowed us to attract more overnight visitors, more conventions, and receive positive publicity about our community and Shreveport-Bossier as a tourism destination.

We have a great interest in protecting the tourism market as a vital economic part of our community. Many businesses in our area have invested and are vested in the interest of their consumers in coming and visiting our community, and the casinos are the main attraction that are bringing them to our area.

The gaming industry has become an integral part of the tourism process in our area which provides an overall positive economic impact for the betterment of our community. Each of these parts work together, I think, to make Shreveport-Bossier a progressive growing community and is developing in many positive ways. Thank you.
COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Thank you very much, Mr. Friedley. We appreciate your testimony and we appreciate your being here.