relational system. Government sponsorship of gambling might even be seen to violate the separation of church and state by promoting a particular religious belief system.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Mr. Weissman.

MR. WEISSMAN: Thank you.

My name is Robert Weissman. I'm Co-director of Essential Action, an organization which works on combatting abuses of corporate power. I'm also editor of Multinational Monitor Magazine, which is a Ralph Nader founded publication that focuses on multinational corporations.

I recently wrote an article on casino gambling for Multinational Monitor, and I brought copies of the issue in which that article appears for the Commission.

Essential Action views the gambling industry as it's evolved in this country over the last decade or two as a case study in corporate greed and predation. Gambling interests prey on communities. Focusing on down trodden and de-industrialized
states and communities, the predatory casino, lottery, and associated companies swoop into states and locales promising riches, but the gambling companies play with a stacked deck. They make money while communities lose.

Casinos function as economic enclaves, much like mines or plantations in Third World countries, and just the way a foreign mine may extract gold and diamonds from a poor Third World nation without providing meaningful linkages to the surrounding area, so the casinos extract great wealth while spreading little to the local economy.

Gambling interests prey on the poor. While the gambling companies assert that all socioeconomic classes gamble in equal numbers, the poor gamble proportionately higher stakes and lose a much higher percentage of their income.

Moreover, the poor gamble differently than the rich do. What is entertainment for the rich is ill advised investment for the poor. The infamous lottery billboard located in a poor Chicago neighborhood, which read, "Your ticket out of here,"
was an aberration only in the blatantness of its appeal. The sentiment underlies much gambling promotion and expresses the real attraction of gambling for many lower income people.

Gambling interests also prey on democracy. As the industry has mushroomed in recent years, it has become a stunningly aggressive political player ready to dig into its overflowing coffers to influence public policy. The industry spent nearly $5 million in the '96 federal election. A recent Mother Jones study found the industry has spent more than $100 million in political contributions and lobbying fees to influence state governments in the last five years.

In the Ohio Initiative to Legalize Casino Gambling held last year, seven commercial interests hoping to run casinos contributed more than $125,000 to the pro legalization campaign. Three that were hoping to win casinos contributed more than $1 million each.

The growing political power and influence of the gambling industry makes now a propitious time for the Commission study, for if gambling is not
reigned in soon, the economic and political power of
the industry will make it very difficult to do so
later, the public interest in doing so
notwithstanding.

One final note. I want to commend the
Commission for the open approach it has adopted in
commencing its study. To further the goal of
obtaining citizen input, I would like to recommend
that you include on your Web site a means for citizens
to E-mail comments directly to the Commission.

We recently successfully encouraged the
Federal Trade Commission to adopt such a policy while
it was in the midst of considering the Staples-Office
Depot merger. The FTC received hundreds of comments
which FTC staff indicated were generally thoughtful
and useful. Some of those comments came from company
whistleblowers, took advantage of a simple way to
communicate directly with the FTC.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Mr. Weissman, I'm
going to ask you to draw to a close.

MR. WEISSMAN: You're likely to have
similar experiences.
Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And if you have further comments, you can give them, and they will be entered into the record.

Ms. Dietrich.

MS. DIETRICH: Good afternoon. I'm Barbara Dietrich. I am President of the League of Women Voters of Philadelphia, representing the President of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania.

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania opposes the legalization of additional forms of gambling in Pennsylvania, such as river boats, slot machines at race tracks, gambling machines in establishments with liquor licenses, et cetera.

We oppose the spread of the gambling industry because we think it violates sound government policy as a method for collecting revenue in several respects. The League's position on taxes holds that any tax system must be equitable, flexible, and able to reliably produce adequate revenue.

A dependence on tax revenue from gambling