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(7:03 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN JAMES: It's my pleasure to
reconvene this meeting of the National Gambling Impact
Study Commission and to begin the public comment
period of our site visit.

We are most anxious to hear from the
residents of this community and are appreciative of
your willingness to come out here on a very cold, at
least for this Southern girl, January evening to share
your perspective on the impact of legalized gambling
on this community.

We've had a very full day and are grateful
to your mayor and to the staff of the Rescue Mission
and everyone who assisted in making our afternoon so
productive.

It was informative to see the city and to
learn first hand about the changes and accomplishments
that have been made in the past 20 years.

As was discussed earlier in the day,
several individuals scheduled to speak have requested
anonymity for personal reasons. They are prepared to
testify before the Commission, but have asked that
their names not be used in the transcript or related
news stories and that photographs and video recordings
not be taken while they are speaking.

These individuals have a compelling story
to tell, and it's important as we deliberate about
such significant issues that we hear as many
perspectives as possible.

For this reason, the Commission has worked
hard to come up with a process that would accommodate
their request. However, the Commissioners feel
strongly and equally committed to conducting itself in
an open manner and to insure that everyone has the
benefit of the information we receive. To exclude the
public and the press would be counterproductive
because their role in this process is as critical as
those who come before us as witnesses.

Those who requested anonymity are not
seeking secrecy. In fact, to the contrary, they are
willing to come here to night to share their very
personal information about the impact of gambling in
their own lives. Nevertheless, they do seek privacy,
particularly in their home town.

While this is a public and an open meeting, we will strive to accommodate these requests. For this reason, members of the press are respectfully asked to honor the request for anonymity by these speakers.

I will notify the public and the press which of the speakers has requested anonymity. For reference, the individuals on the roster of speakers who are only listed by their first names are those individuals seeking anonymity.

I want to remind all of our speakers that remarks are limited to three minutes. If you have a written statement, you may submit that for the record and summarize your comments this evening.

The staff will notify you at the end of your time limit, and a light and, indeed, a buzzer will indicate the time remaining and when to stop.

In all seriousness, in fairness to all of our speakers, I would ask that those testifying limit their remarks to the allotted time, and I would ask of the audience to please refrain from applause and any
unnecessary noise.

We want to hear from as many individuals as possible, and I really do ask your cooperation in that effort.

I want to again express the appreciation of this Commission to all of you for coming here tonight. We will spend a lot of time hearing from the experts, but your perspective is as important to our work as anything else that we'll hear while here.

We're not here to tell the residents of Atlantic City anything about their experience with legalized gambling. As I said earlier, we are here to listen to you.

Please know that your comments, both written and oral will be a part of our deliberations and given the consideration that they merit.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and understanding, and with that we will begin our public comment period, and I would ask your indulgence with names. If I get it incorrectly, please don't hesitate to correct it for the record.

Our first speaker, Kasine Bey.