CHAIRPERSON BURDETT: Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON BURDETT: Good morning, Madam Chair

James and Commission members for allowing me the opportunity to
be here today. I am Vivian Burdette, Tribal Chairperson for the
Tonto Apache Tribe in Payson, Arizona.

The Tonto Apache Tribe was federally recognized in
1972 with 85 acres we began calling home. What matters to our
people is the importance of sharing our resource and lending a
helping hand to one another. We worshipped in a small one light
bulb church. Here we gathered to strengthen our faith. Our
needs were simple and we accepted a way of life that existed on
reservations throughout Central Arizona. Unemployment was high,
education was low and medical facilities were far.

The federal neglect of the Indian nation was
extremely evident. Funding for badly needed projects on the
reservation was scarce and difficult to obtain. Still we
remained strong, determined and concerned, held together by our
families and our faith.

I am here today because I believe in self-sufficiency
of the Indian nation. Tribal government gaming has provided a
means of self-sufficiency. It has created jobs on the
reservation and indirectly created jobs in the community and it
has also increased revenue and economic activity throughout the
state. Tribal government gaming services serves the same purpose
and should be reviewed in the same manner as the state lottery or
parimutuel wagering.
Nationally five percent of gaming revenues are derived from Indian gaming, leaving a large revenue portion for Las Vegas, Atlantic City and state lotteries. Throughout the nation only 33 percent of 557 reservations do not use gaming to support their tribal function. Only a small portion of the tribal gaming operations raise enough to generate income and the majority of the Native Americans still live below poverty level.

On the Tonto Apache Reservation the Mazatzal Casino currently employs 267 non-tribal members. The current unemployment rate on our reservation is less than five percent compared to 70 percent in 1992. Due to the increase of employment opportunities, the overall crime rate for Payson has dropped three percent. The Mazatzal Casino utilizes local business thus helping sustain themselves during the slow winter months. Medical insurance has been provided for 161 non-tribal families and all Tonto Apache tribal members which is 108.

The elderly are provided with daily meals. There is a youth program, day care, playground, education fund and a gymnasium for our reservation. We have a tribal social worker, a tribal substance abuse counselor and a counselor employed by the casino on the premises.

There are just a few of the economic goals which the Tonto Apache Tribe has accomplished from the positive impact of Indian gaming to solidify an economic future and insure the substance and operate our tribal government with less federal assistance. Our dream of self-sufficient is becoming a reality and we are thankful for the progress we have made. We look
forward to the future with which Indian gaming can provide for us.

As always there are those who look for and dwell on the downside of any situation. Admittedly there can be problems associated with this form of industry. Gaming addiction is obviously at issue. However, addiction comes in many forms. Any form of addiction is a concern in any community. Unfortunately we cannot remove all the addictive elements present in our daily lives. Eliminating Indian gaming in Arizona would not remove the addiction of gambling.

We do feel that the resources are available for sufficient dealing with the issue that can arise. Counseling is available for tribal members and the number for Gambling Anonymous is posted throughout the casino. Unfortunately the local charity of Gambling Anonymous has dissolved due to lack of participants. Persons admitting a problem with gambling can be barred from the establishment upon request and are referred to an association which assists them with their problems. We urge people to gamble responsibly.

A close watch is kept on the tribal community based on information from the tribal social service department. There has been no significant increase in alcohol related incidents on the reservation as a result of gaming. Substance abuse is limited to a few persons and is not a result of gaming. The crime rate and juvenile delinquency rate is at its lowest.

Indian gaming has made a positive impact on our lives. In this community and in this state we have been given a definite sense of accomplishment and pride. We have something to
strive for and to grow with to improve and most of all something
to pass onto our youth. We will be passing on a new improved way
of life consistent of higher standard, higher education and self-
sufficiency.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to express the views of the Tonto Apache Tribe on this issue. Enclosed for your review are some fact sheets containing important additional information. If you have any questions I, at this time, will answer them.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you.