CHAIRPERSON JAMES: I'd like to recognize the Honorable Wayne Taylor.

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Good morning, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Members of the Commission. My name is Wayne Taylor, Chairman of the Hopi Tribe and on behalf of the Hopi people I want to express our appreciation to the study Commission for this opportunity to present my views on the impacts of Indian gaming on Indian people.

The Hopi view is, of course, the view of a non-gaming tribe. As many of you know, in 1995 the Hopi Tribe by a referendum vote rejected gaming as a means of revenue generation or economic development. The road of the Hopi people was overwhelming against the concept of gaming on Hopi lands. At the heart of this decision was a concern expressed by many of our people about the potential adverse effects of making gaming easily available to our people.

The potential risk to the cultural integrity of the Hopi society seemed to outweigh the potential benefits to engaging in a tribal gaming enterprise. While the Hopi people have clearly spoken on this point, let me state clearly for you today that the Hopi Tribe respects and supports the sovereign right of other tribes to choose differently. We realize that the decision to engage in gaming activities begins as a personal choice for individual members of the various tribes and ultimately is a political choice for the leadership of the tribes based at least in part on the unique circumstances of each tribe.
We will continue to support the right of other tribes to make this choice. When we think about the impacts of tribal gaming we should start by remembering the underlying purposes of Indian gaming enterprises. At the heart of any tribe's decision to engage in gaming activities seems to be a sincere desire to advance tribal sovereignty and achieve true self-determination. We all realize that without adequate financial resources the promise of tribal self-determination is never reached and remains only a dream.

Choosing one's future must always be supported by the means to make the future a reality. Since the birth of Indian gaming in 1979 a number of tribes have been able to use their gaming revenue to provide increased levels of essential government services to their people, services which might not have been possible without these revenues. In the face of an almost non-existent tax base on most reservations and a shrinking federal dollar, some tribes have found that gaming revenues have been the difference between an inadequate program and quality governmental services.

Certainly one cannot argue that the provision of increasing levels of health care, housing, educational assistance on these reservations is anything but a positive result of the gaming industry. However, the analysis should not stop here. When we think about the impacts of tribal gaming in addition to the possible impacts on tribal economies, we must also look at at least three other areas of impact including; one, the impacts on the individual tribal member gaming participant coming to tribal casinos to spend their individual dollars; two, the impact of the
gaming activity on the gaming tribe itself, in other words, the tribal government sponsoring the gaming activity and the individual tribal members and finally; three, the impact of Indian gaming on non-gaming tribes.

Perhaps the most important question that Indian leaders can ask themselves about the impact of Indian gaming is the question of what is the overall effect on the lives of Indian people of Indian gaming. This requires an examination of whether on balance Indian gaming has improved the quality of life on our tribal homelands and whether it has furthered tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This debate about impact of tribal gaming is different than the usual debate on gaming. This is not about federal regulations or state compacts. This debate examines the effects of the interaction between gaming enterprises and individual tribal members.

In stating the Hopi views about the impacts of gaming on the lives of individual tribal members, let me point out that we have not conducted any polls or commissioned any scientific studies aimed at the particular aspects of human behavior. Our views are stated simply from what we have observed. One need only visit any Indian casino to realize that a significant number of casino patrons are Indian people from the reservations on which the casino is located or from other nearby reservations, including non-gaming reservations.

From this observation, it is easy to conclude that Indian people are spending a part, albeit an undefined part, of their financial resources in gaming activities. I believe it is also safe to conclude that most Indian people do not routinely
have a surplus disposal income which should be expended on games
of chance. Most of our people on most reservations and tribal
communities find it difficult enough to accumulate enough income
on a monthly basis to meet the most basic needs of their
families.

While the decision to expend those funds in gaming
activities is an individual choice, the impacts on family members
who frequently do not participate in that choice are nevertheless
effected. The effects of tribal gaming operations on individual
tribal members and their families deserve a thorough examination
before any final conclusions can be drawn. A substantial measure
of the responsibility for studies aimed at reaching these
conclusions should be shouldered by the gaming tribes.

The effects of gaming activity on the entire tribal
culture and society must also be considered. The impact on
individual tribal members will always translate into impacts on
the overall tribal culture. Indeed, it is not difficult to
envision tribal gaming not only influencing but also becoming a
significant part of tribal culture, perhaps even pushing aside in
importance other characteristics of tribal culture that have long
sustained us and which should be cultivated and nourished.

None of us would want to run the risk that gaming and
its revenues somehow becomes a major identifying factor when
people think about Indian culture. No tribal government should
put itself in a position such that it become so dependent on
gaming revenues that it loses sight of the need to focus on
matters such as building and nurturing the spirit of our people,
encouraging our children to exercise their minds across a wide
field of endeavors and perhaps most importantly, to encourage our
people to cultivate the spiritual strengths that have sustained
all of our tribes throughout history.

Tribal governments must be cautious when they embrace
gaming, cautious not to lose sight of these higher values and
purposes which each of us as tribal leaders should be working
toward. The positive impacts of tribal gaming, and there are
many, must not blind us to the accompanying negative impacts.
Our elders have taught us that there is a balance in life that
with every good thing that comes into our life, there is also
some things that are not so good.

Our responsibility to our children is to maximize
those good things and minimize those that are not so good.
Indian gaming must be subject to the same sort of balancing.
Finally, let me turn to the matter of the impacts of gaming on
the non-gaming tribe.

Unfortunately there has always been a tendency in
this country on the part of the non-Indian to lump all Indian
people into one category. Most non-Indians tend to generalize
about Indian America and to feel that what is true of one tribal
society is also true of another. Public perception or more
properly stated, incorrect public perception, is the enemy of all
tribes. Gaming and non-gaming, perhaps even more unfortunate is
the fact that public perception almost always translate into
congressional perception. One of the most dangerous oxymorons
currently floating around in non-Indian America and particularly
in Congress is the idea of the so-called rich Indian tribe.
Somehow I have never associated the word "rich" with the words "Indian tribe". Many members of the public and Congress seem very comfortable with this phrase. Unfortunately for us this is a classic example of public perception failing to match up with reality. With the exception of a very few, very small and very fortunate tribes, we have had -- who have had extraordinary success with tribal gaming, the majority of tribes across the country still find it very difficult to reconcile the obligation and responsibilities side of their ledger with the income side. Most of us continue to struggle merely to provide the most basic governmental services to our people, protect our lands and the environment and provide meaningful opportunities for growth and advancement of our people.

This false perception by the public and Congress has begun to translate itself into phrase such as "means testing", with the emphasis on mean spirited. Congress has, in recent years, begun to find new justifications for its historic lack of enthusiasm for funding its trust responsibilities to the Indian people of this country. We had become easy for members of Congress to generalize this attitude by expressing the belief that tribes across the country are rich as a result of tribal gaming, are fully capable of taking care of the full range of funding needs, and should, therefore, not look to the Federal Government for assistance.

This is perhaps the most stinging impact of Indian tribal gaming on non-gaming tribes. While tribal gaming successes have provided no direct tangible benefits to non-gaming tribes, the non-gaming tribes, nevertheless, share the brunt of
the congressional backlash and unfavorable public perception. All the negative characterizations typically associated with gaming activities such as compulsive addictive behavior, the search for the illusive something for nothing, the desire to get rich quick and the reaping of financial benefits at the hands of human behavior, these characteristics tend to spill over to effect all Indian tribes whether gaming or not.

Gaming tribes should seriously consider initiatives aimed at eliminating this unfortunate and unfair spill-over effect. Potentially the most danger impact of the incorrect public perception of gaming on all tribes is the noticeable shift in the way the tribes are being viewed, not only in Congress but by the public in general. In the past Congress and the courts and I believe the public have viewed tribes as governments exercising governmental responsibilities and dedicated to the best interests of their people. There now seems to be a shifting of that view toward one in which tribal governments are now viewed primarily as casino operators and only secondarily as tribal governments.

I'm afraid my time has run out.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you very much, Chairman Taylor. We will submit the entire testimony for the full Commission.

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Thank you.