COMMISSIONER WILHELM: On our agenda Mr. Tucker is listed next is that --

MR. TUCKER: That would be fine.

COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Okay. Mr. Tucker, thank you.

MR. TUCKER: Yes, I am Tom Tucker and I am President of the California Council on Problem Gambling and I'm also a recovering compulsive gambler for a number of years and a recovering alcoholic.

I was asked to put together a social impact paper, which I have, I'm not going to repeat it. I can just tell you that yes there is some social consequences as a result of Indian gaming. I would say that some of the stores that we found in at least in the California tribes are a result of the Indian casinos in the California area are probably not really that much un-similar that you might find in other situations whether it be Atlantic City or Foxwoods or any other place.

But they're serious problems. They're talking about a young woman who got to the point of her gambling that she left her 18 month old child in the car for 14 hours while she gambled compulsively. And when she came out the child was crying and was wet and was hungry. And these are not good stories, these are serious social impacts.

There's stories of one woman who's husband died he was a little bit older than her, but she was a young widow at 42 years of age. She went to one of the local casinos and started to play video keno in absence of her grief or in substitution for her grief feelings. And in the first year she gambled $370,000 on a video keno machine in one local casino and then tried to get
some help for herself and came back and found that she was unable
to stop gambling and she finished in the next year gambling away
the balance of the half million dollar estate. And she was left
basically penniless, she does have her home, she's struggling
now. She said that she would probably never have gone into
gambling herself, she would never have -- she doesn't believe --
she doesn't believe she would have gone Laughlin or to Las Vegas,
but in any event she wound up with these kinds of problems.

I've answered the help line for about three years now
and I've heard a lot of stories. I can tell you that the help
line statistics, which I hope you have in front of you there,
will show you that the majority of calls that we do get in
California now are, in fact, from Indian casinos. Running a
close second, however, is the California state lottery at 21
percent.

So and unfortunately these figures are very, very
misleading because the California state lottery recently
themselves said that they thought they wanted to advertise a
problem gambling referral line. But they didn't do that until
April of 1998. And by the time we go the statistics we only had
or two months of their statistics so they're only showing you at
about 7 percent, but I have the June 1998 figures and those are
21.1 percent in California state lottery.

And what I'm really saying is that now that they're
putting out the number we're getting the -- the emphasis is
coming from the lottery players. Where before they never did
they just never had our number. And most people will agree that
people that play the lottery exclusively are not really gambling
addicts per se, but that most gambling addicts, most compulsive gamblers myself included would buy a $100.00 worth of lottery scratch offs at a time to kill time in between races or if I was in a town that didn't have any gambling I would do that myself just for the rush in the action.

So all I'm really saying here is that the social impact as far as we can see has been large. I've talked to judges, I've talked to probation departments, I've talked to child protection agencies and they're telling me that things are happening, you know. In some of the local meetings people are coming in with court cards all of the sudden that they're being required by the judges to attend recovery meetings as a result of their crimes that were committed through the local gambling at the local Indian casinos.

This is new to us. We rarely saw that before. Now we're seeing a lot of this happening and they're case loads are picking up so that's part and parcel of it.

On the other hand I'm seeing that in general most people in the gambling industry themselves I think the race track people said the other day that they've been waiting 60 years to identify that they had a problem with gambling. And yet they want to try to start doing something, but they haven't yet. They're trying to do something. The lottery itself has waited 12 years to say something. And I think that now that the American Gaming Association has come out and said that yeah we need a responsible gaming policy all over the country. I'm very encouraged by that.
But I believe that there should be a total approach to all of this and that is like a one percent solution I call it. Jokingly one of my colleagues said the other day that if they're really serious about doing something on prevention education for young children and treatment and the like well then you keep 99.9 percent of your profits just give us one tenth of one percent and see what we can do to help these families.

Gambling kills. When you folks go to your next stop I'm afraid you're going to find out that last weekend a young man committed suicide by jumping off a river boat casino in Louisville or in Louisiana, pardon me. And these are stories that I hear all the time.

People that are in my area they drive hours to get over here to buy a power ball ticket because we don't have it in California. That's almost a 10 hour round trip drive to buy one ticket. I mean think about it, is that normal behavior? Probably not.

So we believe that, you know, people that have this it's an illness. They're sick spiritually, they're sick mentally and emotionally and physically. Some of us deprived ourselves of our insulin when we were supposed to be, you know, taking care of our insulin problems we didn't take care of those. We didn't eat properly, we didn't rest properly, we went for days without sleep. And then sadly on the way back home we had situations that either resulted in car accidents or we drifted off the road or whatever.

So these are serious problems and they need to be addressed and that's really what we're all about is to help, you
know, do the research and so forth to get the word out there to people.

I'm sad to report, and I love California it's my home all my adult life, I'm sad to report that we are embarrassed whenever we go to conferences -- National Council on Problem Gambling things like we just went to in Las Vegas that everyone says what's the matter with California they're not supporting any kind of education. There's not one course in compulsive gambling or problem gambling education in the entire school system. Not one and yet the money for the lottery, two to three billion dollars in sales every year, is supposed to be going for education. It's not happening.

And what's happening to, you know, people that are actually are trying to chip in and do something about it? Well, I must report and I have a fact sheet, I hope you have it in front of you there, that there's very little being done. But the Native American community came forth first. They were the first government to step up and take care of us by getting an office.

We're open for 12 years now as an all volunteer organization and we've been working out of our homes and answering the phones at night out of our homes. Now, they've come up with an office space for us and they've stepped up to the plate a little bit. The race track industry did something as well just before your Commission meeting, just before your Commission visit. They gave us $25,000.00 to pay for the help line calls. As you may have seen they have these 800 numbers on the back of the betting lines in the race track.
So we think it's a total approach and either I'm part of the problem or I'm part of the solution. And I have nothing against any form of gaming, but I do have a lot against a form of gaming that doesn't see their responsibility in taking care of these problems. Because you know let's face it eventually what's going to happen is 30 more attorney's general are going to start bringing suits against casinos. They're going to do it I guarantee it because we saw it with tobacco, we saw it with alcohol and we're going to see here it eventually.

You've got, you know, several remedies for alcoholic -- I mean people that serve alcoholics who are obviously were drunk and they go out and kill somebody. Well there's a civil penalty there and sometimes a statutory penalty against bartenders serving somebody who's obviously drunk. We do have some serious problems with people, we know who the compulsive gamblers are. Just look at the ATM machine around midnight, okay, because that's when you can -- when it's around midnight and you've already taken $500.00 from your checking account in one day as soon it goes one second past midnight you can get another $500.00, okay. These are where the compulsive gamblers are hanging around. That's just a small example of what you might see.

And I'm quite sure that people that are in the gaming industry are quite well aware of the signs and symptoms. But however we need direction we can be your best friends if you allow us the opportunity to give you the what we've learned over the past 15 years. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you Mr. Tucker.