CHAIRPERSON JAMES:
And I do want to thank the Attorney General of Connecticut, Richard Blumenthal, who has just joined us. He was elected in 1990, I've introduced the rest of the panel, I have not introduced you. And before becoming Attorney General he served as a member of the Connecticut State Senate from 1987 to 1990 before which he served in the Connecticut House of Representatives.

Welcome General Blumenthal and thank you for accepting our invitation to appear today. And I know that you as well as several of our other panelists do have planes to catch and other state business to be about. So I would ask the indulgence of the rest of the panel to have the Attorney General go at this particular time.

ATTY. GEN. BLUMENTHAL: Thank you very much. I very much appreciate this opportunity to be with you and your invitation to offer a few observations based on my experience as Attorney General and our experience as a state. And I am going to take you at your word, not read my testimony, invite you to
do so, if you think it's worth your while I have 30
copies of it, that I just happened to have brought with
me. And I'd make them available to whomever might need
to take them.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: We'll ask staff to take
that and distribute them.

ATTY. GEN. BLUMENTHAL: Thank you.

I really urge the Commission in its
recommendations to recognize the existing elements of
tribal sovereignty while at the same time giving what I
think is very important recognition to two
extraordinarily and profoundly important needs that we
have seen based on our experience in the State of
Connecticut. And the first is to provide a greater
voice for the state and local governments in the
vicinity in the locations where gaming takes place, and
where public policy is so deeply and direly affected
when Indian gaming is permitted and even encouraged.

And second, to apply basic worker
protections in federal and state law to the tribal
employers. Or require the tribes to enact laws and ordinance or protections that are commensurate with the federal protections.

We have seen in our own experience examples that show the importance of both of these considerations. Connecticut is a small state, and yet it is host to probably the biggest casino in the world at this point, certainly one of the most lucrative. And there is no question that we have enjoyed tremendously important benefits in our state, not the least of which is that our Indian gaming operations are extraordinarily generous in many respects to local community causes. And they are one of the largest employers if not together the largest employer of 20,000 workers in our state.

And yet the casinos and the gambling operations have placed very significant burdens on local communities and on the state itself. In terms of traffic, environmental protection, land use, police and fire services, the surrounding communities and indeed
the state as a whole has felt the impact of these activities. And I think that while Indian gaming may be largely self-regulating under the federal procedures and the compact that govern them both at Foxwoods and the Mohegan Sun, and while Connecticut itself has other kinds of gambling the unique status of these operations is extremely important to the life of our state and bears some recognition by this Commission.

And I would urge that the Commission really heed the experience of Connecticut and provide, for example, for application of wage and hour protection to workers who are at the casino. Enable the state to provide other kinds of anti-discrimination protection. And provide for worker's compensation systems that are commensurate with what the federal program is.

The Mashantucket Pequot Tribe has recently withdrawn from the worker's compensation system that applies to other workers all around the State of Connecticut. And while in that area and others the Tribe may argue that it does provide more or less
similar or comparable kinds of protection. The fact is that I think there's a legitimate view that it doesn't.

But perhaps even more important, the rights by which workers can protect those guarantees are severely circumscribed. Without belaboring the point that Senator Prague has made to you about the process itself, I think it's fair to say that it is very, very narrowly circumscribed in terms of procedural basic rights, due process, that workers would have in other kinds of context.

And I think that this Commission can really strike a blow for employee rights and basic due process by guaranteeing that workers are assured meaningful opportunities to be heard so they feel that their rights against discrimination, against insufficient protection, in that regard and many others, are assured.

My testimony could expand on that point at greater length, but I think the other area where it is important for this Commission to recognize the burden
on the state from Indian gaming facilities relates to those services that have to be provided to the annexation process, to the Bureau of Indian Affairs consideration of decisions to put land into trust. And indeed, the federal recognition process itself. All of which may not be directly on point to gambling as that term may be defined narrowly, but nonetheless in today's age when many reservations have these kinds of facilities are very much relevant to your consideration. And I say that having discussed it at length with my colleagues around the state, other Attorneys General who share many of these concerns and I think would be more than happy to share them with you either personally or in writing.

So I hope that the Commission will consider recommendations, and I'd be happy to expand on them, that more carefully balance Indian tribal sovereignty concerns with the state's strong and legitimate interest in regulating gaming and its attendant burdens.
There is no question that that idea of sovereignty is one that we've not only accepted but that we support. I know what it means to challenge it. And I think we also need to distinguish between different tribes, perhaps, even in Connecticut, different gambling operations. There are subtleties here that merit your recognition as well. But I hope that without being over simplistic these two considerations will be considered and will be part of your recommendations.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you very much.