CHAIRPERSON JAMES:

Jeffrey Tufts?
MR. TUFTS: Thank you.

I would like to thank the Commission for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would also like to welcome you to the Commonwealth this afternoon and I certainly hope you can take time to enjoy the city on this special holiday.

My name is Jeffrey Tufts, I am the Chairman of the Easton Board of Selectman, which is the executive body in our town. Easton has a population of 22,000 and is centered in a triangle between Boston, Providence and Cape Cod. Our community has seen substantial residential growth over the past 10 to 15 years, which in turn has resulted in the need for increased services.

I'd like to give the Commission an example of what the Massachusetts Lottery effect is on our community. The Town of Easton receives revenue the following way. One, we have our local revenues, which are provided by property tax, excise tax and local fees. Property tax and excise tax are capped by a ballot question at 2% percent annual increase. And we have state aid, we have general aid that is based on a statewide formula.
We have education allotments, which is the Education Reform Law, which mandates per pupil expenses statewide. In Easton's case, approximately 75 percent of our education costs are funded by the state, the remaining amount must be funded by the local revenue.

The last piece is the Lottery aid. Local officials are pretty much hamstrung by the formulas and mandatory funding needs. Local fees and Lottery aid work are the safety net for local government. Last year Easton received $1.5 million in Lottery aid, approximately five percent of our entire budget.

As mentioned before, mandatory spending matched with dedicated revenues determine most of our budget decisions. In Easton, we obviously fund our mandatory expenditures first, and then allocate the remaining funds to cover the most pressing needs. During budget formulation, Easton conservatively level funds Lottery aid, any increase in the aid is used to cover unexpected needs. Last year it increased $294 thousand.

The past few years the increase in Lottery aid has been used to cover unexpected tuition costs for new special needs children, cover the unanticipated costs of snow removal, or fund building safety repairs.
In prior years, when the economy was not as strong, Lottery aid was the difference in keeping a police officer on each shift or how many fire stations were staffed 24 hours.

As an optional revenue stream I wholeheartedly endorse the Lottery. Easton has taken a very conservative approach to budgeting, trying to protect ourselves from economic changes, or shifts in our revenue stream. Even with that said we have come to depend on the Lottery to fund a large portion of our budget. The amount of aid Easton receives could be matched to the entire cost of our entire fire and ambulance department or the entire DPW budget.

Easton doesn't suffer from any side effects from the Lottery, Easton has a few convenience stores and some taverns that offer Keno, but the anticipated mob scenes have not developed. The only attribute of the Lottery that Easton residents feel is the occasional checkout delay at convenience stores while the person in front of you is picking their ticket.

I would like to thank you for allowing me to come before you today and I would be happy to expand on my remarks if necessary.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you very much.