MR. BILL SEITZ

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Bill Seitz.

MR. SEITZ: Good afternoon. My name is Bill Seitz. I work for the Chicago Metropolitan Baptist Association and I'm chair of the religious task force to oppose increased legalized gambling, an organization of religious groups and other organizations opposed to the spread of casinos to Chicago and elsewhere in Illinois. The group has been actively opposing the spread of gambling since 1993.

The task force has looked at several aspects of gambling in Chicago. First, we have monitored the success of the gambling institutions and the shift of citizens becoming losers in the whole gambling game in Illinois. Another was to poll public sentiment on issues of gambling expansion in the city, finally a measure of how gambling impacts the city's very poorest, the homeless.

Gambling's success is based on an individual's failure. In 1996 the Illinois Gaming Board revealed how players continued to be losers at casinos, at the ten gambling boats in Illinois. Over 25 million people in Illinois gambled in boats in 1996. They lost a staggering $950 million. In 1995 the religious task force to oppose increased gambling released a poll conducted by the political science department at the University of Illinois at Chicago on gambling. The survey revealed an opposition to the expansion of riverboats, development of land based casinos and poker video machines. The poll further revealed 70 percent of those polled support a state or local
referendum on the expansion of gambling. We're still waiting on
the referendum.

After all the discussion was over, the people felt
that gambling in Chicago, the religious task force said, that
previously only 57.4 percent of Chicago voters have rejected land
based casinos in 1989 referendum. The first survey ever done on
homelessness and gambling, an unhealthy mix, asked the city's
homeless services providers five questions concerning the impact
of gambling and homelessness. The results show a strong
relationship between gambling and homelessness.

82 percent think all forms of gambling available is
addictive. 73 percent, gambling including playing the lottery
makes it difficult for homeless people to put their lives back
together. And an astounding 33 percent answered gambling is a
factor in homelessness in the people in their program. Another
76 percent said there are too many gambling opportunities in the
metro area. The social implications of gambling predicated on
the individuals having to be a loser to make the system work runs
counter to the American ideals of fairness and hard work.

We have provided some important points of concern.

The religious task force encourages the National Gambling Impact
Study group to adopt these points in the interim. By the way,
we've heard about 80 million to one tonight for Powerball. Your
chances of falling out of bed and dying are two million to one.
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.