CHAIRMAN JAMES: Vernon Bergstrom.

MR. BERGSTROM: Thank you. I have also submitted a written report on gambling in Minnesota which documents this particular summary that I am now presenting. I'm Vernon Bergstrom, director of Minnesotans against Gambling. We are a grass roots bi-partisan non-sectarian statewide group of citizens who have eagerly joined the mushrooming national backlash against gambling.

I'm a retired county prosecutor, a liberal and a member of a mainline Evangelical Lutheran church in America. I oppose gambling. In the past ten years many Minnesotans have been pulled into gambling's snare, orchestrated by big gambling in Nevada, Atlantic City, some willingly, most lured. This seduction, appealing as it does to the basic social impulse of humans, led us last year to wager between five and six billion dollars on a host of gambling black holes.

Most gambling is done by women playing mindless slot machines in 17 American Indian casinos in Minnesota. Our citizens, witnesses to the gambling caused crimes, family breakups, bankruptcies, suicides and addictions, the terrible cost of which it is, will be tabulated by this Commission are fed up. They rankle in the knowledge that in the eyes of Vegas they are but feeder markets for a greater Vegas tourist base of a new generation of gamblers.

Minnesota citizens see a strong parallel in the gambling fight to that other successful tobacco wars. After all, it's our own Attorney General Hubert Humphrey III that leads the
war on big tobacco. His position saying that Internet gambling
is illegal in the state of Minnesota was sustained by the
Minnesota Supreme Court just last week. This Commission's work
will determine much of America's future. I want to compliment
you for including studies of 16 and 17-year-old addictions and
would plead that you also include 12 and 16-year-olds. Cost
studies are needed in the areas of gambling causing loss of work,
work accidents, highway accidents, secondhand smoke.

I've read where a casino employee whose spends eight
hours on the job but doesn't smoke, in effect has the cause of
smoking one package of cigarettes, though he or she never touched
them. Jobs are not just jobs. There's a difference. Jobs vary
widely in terms of contribution to society. With this backlash
the past few years have shown that gambling's millions are really
no match for organized citizens who are fed up.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Bergstrom. I'm going
to ask you to submit the rest in writing and we will be happy to
review the whole testimony.

MR. BERGSTROM: I have submitted it all in writing,
ma'am. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you. You're very welcome.