

1 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Father Kenny.

2 FATHER KENNY: Madame Chair and gentlemen of the  
3 National Gaming Impact Study Commission, I'm pleased to welcome  
4 you to Las Vegas. If you've had a chance to study my  
5 biographical background, you will note that I've spent most of  
6 my life in Las Vegas. My father, William J. Kenny, now  
7 deceased, worked for nearly 30 years in the gaming industry,  
8 most of that time as a keno rider and boss at the Horseshoe  
9 Hotel and Casino in downtown Las Vegas.

10 During my summers back home from my seminary studies  
11 I also worked at the Horseshoe Hotel and Casino. First, before  
12 I was 21 years old, in what is called the count room, where  
13 revenue is counted. I counted money for the non-gaming  
14 revenues, restaurant, bar and hotel. When I turned 21 I was an  
15 accountant for keno money revenues and eventually worked in the  
16 casino cage as a cashier.

17 Growing up in Las Vegas, attending grade school and  
18 high school here, many of my classmates were also from families  
19 who owned or worked in gambling properties. Since my ordination  
20 to the Catholic priesthood 27 years ago, I've been assigned in  
21 the Las Vegas area. Therefore, I believe that I'm uniquely  
22 qualified to speak to you, the members of the National Gambling  
23 Impact Study Commission, about the impact of gambling upon  
24 myself, friends and relatives, and the thousands of families to  
25 whom I have and am ministering as a priest.

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1 Yes, I've heard all the jokes, especially in the  
2 seminaries in California, Washington D.C. and Europe about  
3 living in Sin City, lost wages, et cetera. I always answer that  
4 I grew up in the city and turned out pretty good as an ordained  
5 Catholic priest, for once you leave the gambling corridors of  
6 the casino center on the Las Vegas strip, Las Vegas is just like  
7 any other city in the southwestern United States. Drive along  
8 any of our neighborhood streets and you could as well be in  
9 Phoenix, Albuquerque or Palm Springs.

10 So many times I've been asked the rather ridiculous  
11 question well, where do you people live in Las Vegas. I wonder  
12 what answer they expect. In the hotels, in trailers behind the  
13 casinos, underground? We live like everybody else. In houses,  
14 condos, townhouses, trailers, et cetera. We live on real  
15 streets. In our neighborhoods we have schools, parks, baseball,  
16 softball, soccer and football fields. Basketball courts,  
17 gymnasiums, YMCA's and YWCA's, Seven 11's, supermarkets,  
18 shopping centers, malls, movie theaters, ice and roller skating  
19 rinks, water parks, bicycling and jogging paths. We have  
20 churches; more per capita than many cities in the USA.

21 When outside of Las Vegas many Catholics tell me  
22 that they've been to the Catholic church in Las Vegas. I  
23 politely correct them that they were probably at the cathedral  
24 or the shrine to catholic churches on the strip serving the  
25 tourist population. But in fact, there are more than 20 other

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1 Catholic parishes in the Las Vegas area serving thousands of  
2 Catholic parishioners.

3 My parish of Christ the King Catholic Community has  
4 over 3,000 families registered, and we're not the largest. Two  
5 or three others have four to 5,000 registered households. Our  
6 children belong to cub, brownie, boy and girl scout troops with  
7 parents- adults as their leaders. They play in soccer leagues,  
8 Pop Warner Football, Little League, et cetera. It is as unfair  
9 to judge all of Las Vegans by the image of the casino center and  
10 the Las Vegas Strip as it is to judge all those who live in New  
11 Orleans by the French Quarter or Bourbon Street, or those who  
12 live in New York City by Manhattan or Times Square, or all San  
13 Franciscans by Fishermen's Wharf or the Tenderloin District.

14 Once you leave the parts of town that attract the  
15 tourist population, the rest of the city is as normal as apple  
16 pie and the 4th of July. What impact does the casino industry  
17 have on the community? As far as negative impact I see very  
18 little that differentiates it from other parts of the country.  
19 Though I've served as a priest only in Las Vegas, I have  
20 classmates from the Catholic University of America in Washington  
21 D.C. from practically each of the other 49 states. When we get  
22 together and compare notes we all face the same problems.  
23 Dysfunctional families, the problems of both parents working,  
24 latchkey kids, divorce, the impact of sex and violence in the  
25 media especially on TV, peer pressure, the enormous pressure  
26 competition at school and in athletics, the attraction to money,

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1 the lack of real heroes, the disappointment in government, et  
2 cetera. These problems in Las Vegas with a population of over  
3 1,000,000, are also faced by people living in New York,  
4 Baltimore, Miami, Chicago, St. Louis, Denver, San Diego, Phoenix  
5 and Seattle.

6 I do see some positive benefits offered by the  
7 casino industry. Because the casinos in Las Vegas are open 24  
8 hours there are many more jobs to fill than might be available  
9 in other industries that have business hours of only 9:00 to  
10 5:00 or even early morning to late night. Every casino and  
11 hotel has a need for three shifts; day, swing, and graveyard in  
12 many of its departments. Casino, restaurants, hotel, shops, et  
13 cetera. Because there are three shifts each day in many of  
14 these casino-hotel departments, some couples do split their  
15 individual shifts between them resulting in one parent always  
16 being at home with the children. It has a financial advantage  
17 of not having to pay for day care, but of course it puts a  
18 strain on the couple themselves and their own time together as a  
19 couple and as a family, but most do find a satisfactory way to  
20 accomplish this, capitalizing their quality time together in  
21 joint days off.

22 Most casinos pay competitive wages with minor  
23 differences. The hotels on the strip usually pay a little more  
24 than do the ones downtown on the casino center and the  
25 neighborhood casinos. Normally casinos who have union workers  
26 in the hotel and restaurants have higher salaries and better

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1 benefits and health packages. However, some casinos that are  
2 non-union in these departments do offer quite attractive and  
3 competitive salaries and benefits.

4 I know that salaries offered here in combination  
5 with the costs of housing and living in general are very good  
6 for the employees. I don't know of any additional costs other  
7 than the differences in some benefit packages. Some companies  
8 pay for the entire health and pension plan, while others have a  
9 shared payment plan with the employee. I am constantly being  
10 told by new parishioners, many of whom have moved here from  
11 other parts of the country, that they are living better than  
12 ever before and have finally been able to afford to put money  
13 down for a house; something they might not have been able to do  
14 as soon or at all in other states.

15 There seems to be a real pride in casino workers  
16 that they work for this particular casino. I believe there are  
17 plenty of advancement opportunities in most areas. I can tell  
18 story after story of persons who started out as maids, porters,  
19 food servers, slot machine change persons, dealers of dice and  
20 black jack, hotel registration clerks, and now are heads of  
21 their shift, department managers, pit bosses, et cetera. Most  
22 casinos prefer to advance within their own ranks and these  
23 persons' experience and loyalty. Yes, when a new casino opens  
24 many people do apply for employment there because they now have  
25 the experience that a new casino needs. Naturally this leaves

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1 vacancies in the casinos they have left, vacancies that are  
2 always filled quickly and adequately.

3 I believe it's a good town for minority employment  
4 for many reasons. Casinos should operate under a  
5 non-discrimination policy. There are so many jobs available  
6 that those sheer numbers of opportunities make it possible for  
7 anyone to apply and be hired. For a person who lacks the  
8 skills, there are easily accessible training. Dealer schools  
9 for the casino games, on-the-job training for many of the hotel  
10 and restaurant positions, union-sponsored training and  
11 placement. I believe we have one of the lowest unemployment  
12 rates in the country. I'm convinced that almost anyone could  
13 get a job in Las Vegas if that person truly wants to work.

14 Not being an insider in gambling anymore, I do not  
15 know of discrimination in casinos because of their race,  
16 religion, color, ethnic background, age or sex. I would think  
17 that the percentage of minorities in the casino employment is  
18 similar to the percentage of the population as a whole. Yes,  
19 many persons must enter casino work at a low entry level  
20 position because of limited skills and knowledge of gaming. I  
21 do not believe, and I hope not, that it's tied to one's being  
22 part of a minority group, but simply lack of skills at the time  
23 of hire. As stated before, extensive training is available,  
24 advancement is possible.

25 I don't think there are major differences between  
26 management and labor's points of view concerning the overall

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1 need to serve the customer. The tourist, the convention  
2 attendee, the gambler, the shopper, the diner, et cetera.  
3 Everyone knows that the customer comes first and that Las Vegas'  
4 future depends on the satisfaction of the customer and his or  
5 her return to Las Vegas. Management, of course, also wants a  
6 satisfied working force. As I stated earlier, I hear of great  
7 satisfaction and pride from many different casino employees that  
8 they are happy to work at such and such casino and are loyal to  
9 that casino.

10 The Las Vegas industries of hotel and gambling have  
11 the normal differences of opinion between labor and management,  
12 especially at the time of contract negotiations. I belong to  
13 the Las Vegas Interfaith Council for Worker Justice, similar to  
14 other such organizations in other cities, to work with  
15 management and employees to arrive at better and more just wage  
16 levels, benefits, and working conditions. Our work has been  
17 productive in many areas, but I don't believe our problems are  
18 unique to the gaming industry but just part of the normal  
19 tensions that exist in most places between management and labor.

20 In closing I would like to emphasize that Las Vegas  
21 is a great place in which to have grown up, and an even greater  
22 place today. I say greater today because there is more  
23 opportunities today in Las Vegas for family and youth activities  
24 than when I was growing up here. With our tremendous growth  
25 comes more recreational, educational, spiritual and social  
26 opportunities.

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1           As a priest I administer, as most priests do all  
2 over the country, to the needs of families, couples, singles,  
3 children, teens, young adults, et cetera. I do not find that  
4 I'm forced to provide any special type of counseling to our  
5 parishioners here due to the gambling industry. In fact,  
6 growing up here and watching some of the young people grow up  
7 today in Las Vegas, I know that gambling is not an attraction,  
8 minimal at best. Perhaps with gambling in our backyard, it's  
9 just not an attraction to us. It's just part of our town's  
10 industry. I don't experience our young people craving to gamble  
11 or getting fake ID's to sneak into casinos. Most people who do  
12 gamble, locals do as a source of recreation just as in other  
13 cities they would play Friday night poker, Wednesday night  
14 church bingo, Saturday at the race track, or a Sunday afternoon  
15 bridge game. I do very few counseling sessions for the gambling  
16 addict. Yet more and more casinos are providing in-house  
17 counseling or paying for the counseling of their own employees  
18 who might have a gambling problem.

19           Nevada and Las Vegas are the national pioneers in  
20 the casino gambling. Over the years we have worked out an  
21 atmosphere for the tourist and the local. We have a strong and  
22 effective Gaming Commissioner that's worked on all the  
23 licensing, the regulating necessary. We should be the model for  
24 all other areas of the country that might consider having  
25 gambling. We seem to have worked out many of the problems --

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1 and they are there -- and are adequately prepared to handle  
2 future problems.

3 I would recommend Las Vegas as an ideal place to  
4 live for many reasons; the weather, the cost of living,  
5 employment, possibility of advancement, an ever growing and good  
6 school system, opportunities for recreation. Yes, Las Vegas,  
7 even with its gambling industry, is a family town. Again, I  
8 grew up here and I turned out pretty good.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you, Father Kenny. There  
10 are obviously a lot of people here who agree with that  
11 assessment of how you turned out.

12 FATHER KENNY: Thank you.

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