

1 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Lacy Thompson? Thank you for
2 being here, Mr. Thompson.

3 MR. THOMPSON: Thank you. I don't have the
4 compelling story that Ms. Bray has or certainly not the stack of
5 information that Representative Jenkins has or the standing that
6 the last other two gentlemen have had, but what I am is a
7 lifetime resident of this state. I love this state, built a
8 career here, want to stay here, and so gambling is a concern to
9 the extent that it is available in our state now. So I
10 appreciate the opportunity to come and to have a brief comment
11 with the Commission.

12 I must say I'm a little mystified even about the need
13 for such a Commission. I think about if we were discussing a
14 drug that had been developed to improve people's outlook and
15 moods and we found that that drug had side effects where it would
16 actually kill some people or drive others into spirals of
17 depression that would lead them to lose homes and families and
18 jobs and lead them to steal and kill and cheat just to get more
19 of the drug, would we even discuss whether we should make it
20 widely and easily available, and would we have our public leaders
21 endorsing it and advocating it, and would we just insist that the
22 harm it was doing to those few people was worth what good it was
23 doing? I don't think we would.

24 But that's what we've done with gambling. We've gone
25 into business with it, we've legalized it and made it so
26 available that it's pervasive, and there are people who have
27 suffered. I'm an editor with the Louisiana Baptist Newspaper and
28 I've interviewed some of them that have lost thousands of

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1 dollars, that have ended up in jail because of their gambling
2 problems and their addictions, and those are real people and
3 their lives are worth something, and we seem to be saying in many
4 ways that they're not worth as much as the profit we can make
5 from legalized gambling. And I don't think that's the right
6 message to be giving.

7 And I know there are many reasons for opposing
8 legalized gambling. I guess I wanted to come today just to say I
9 have three very personal ones, and those are my sons, and I'm
10 trying to pass on to them some of the same lessons, values my
11 father instilled in me: hard work, honesty, loyalty, commitment,
12 perseverance, kindness, compassion. I want my sons to learn that
13 the answer to hard times is hard work, and that the secret to
14 success is having a dream and doing what you can and working to
15 achieve that. But that's not the lesson that we're teaching with
16 gambling in Louisiana.

17 We have hard problems in this state, like any other
18 state, but instead of attacking them with hard work, I think
19 we've opted for the easy answer of gambling in many ways,
20 insisting that its money is going to solve everything. And
21 instead of enabling our people to reach their dreams, we've told
22 them to forget hard work and take a chance on a miracle and just
23 count on fantasy.

24 I'm sorry but those are lessons I will not teach my
25 sons. I want them to grow up with better values than that, and I
26 want Louisiana to be a better state than that. I think it's time
27 that we all looked ourselves and our problems head on and we do
28 what my dad taught me to do when I was growing up: He said,

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1 There comes a time when you just roll up your sleeves and make a
2 little dust in the world and do something.

3 ` And I think it's time we did that, it's time to get
4 to work and make Louisiana what it can be, what it should be. I
5 think we can only do that without gambling, and I think we need
6 to do that, if for no other reason than the sake of our children.
7 Thank you very much.

8 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Thank you very much, Mr.
9 Thompson, for being here and for your testimony.

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