

1 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Sharon LaFuria?

2 (No response.)

3 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Trudy Piraro?

4 (No response.)

5 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Patricia Vanicore?

6 (No response.)

7 COMMISSIONER WILHELM: Preston Friedley? And again,  
8 I hope I didn't butcher your name, sir.

9 MR. FRIEDLEY: No. You did very well.

10 I'm Preston Friedley. I'm the president of the  
11 Convention and Tourist Bureau for Shreveport and Bossier City;  
12 I've had that position for about 15 years. I've submitted my  
13 statement in writing but I'll read it very quickly for you from  
14 our community's point of view. And of course, I know Don Pierson  
15 submitted a document to you that I know that you'll have an  
16 opportunity to review that really is much more detailed than any  
17 information we'll share with you in this three-minute time frame.

18 The addition of casinos to Bossier City and  
19 Shreveport, Louisiana has created a tremendous economic boost to  
20 our area. The positive impact has manifested itself through the  
21 additional jobs, the developments across our area, the added tax  
22 dollars, complete riverfront revitalization, and the development  
23 of our community as a tourist destination.

24 The overall impact has allowed our area to invest in  
25 many long-term projects for the overall betterment of our  
26 community. The casino tax revenues that we have generated have  
27 helped our city improve its infrastructure, have been the  
28 catalyst to downtown revitalization, have developed a new

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1 festival site on our riverfront, and have helped create a new  
2 Sciport Discovery Center which is a 67,000 square foot science  
3 center with an IMAX dome theater.

4 We currently have plans for the construction of a new  
5 14,700-seat arena and an upgraded and improved convention center,  
6 plus additional further riverfront improvements in our community  
7 utilizing the casino revenues.

8 The casinos have been a catalyst for the development  
9 across our entire community, as well as proving to be good  
10 corporate citizens through their sponsorships and donations.

11 Since the addition of casinos to our area, we've  
12 experienced tremendous growth, including: a new shopping  
13 center -- the first time we've developed a new shopping center in  
14 our community in over ten years; new restaurants to the tune of  
15 opening a restaurant every other week in our community; new  
16 hotels; and additional department stores.

17 Shreveport-Bossier hotel room sales, for example, has  
18 nearly doubled since the addition of the casinos coming into our  
19 market, increasing from \$32 million in 1993 to over \$60 million  
20 in 1997. This is also an indication of the number of day  
21 trippers that have come into our community which has nearly  
22 doubled during that time period. Those visitors have added  
23 additional sales to our food industry, transportation, shopping,  
24 and the increased economic impact has helped generate additional  
25 sales tax revenues from these visitors.

26 All of those positive improvements have allowed other  
27 aspects of our community to flourish. We've attracted many  
28 regional and national conventions to our community, as well as

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1 special events because of the casinos and their entertainment,  
2 the hotels and the additional facilities.

3           The awareness of Shreveport-Bossier now as a tourism  
4 destination positively correlates a great deal by the casinos as  
5 what they have meant to us as attractions, the many fine  
6 accommodations, the facilities they offer, and their continued  
7 addition to the gaming market in our  
8 community.

9           We have found that the more gaming attractions that  
10 Shreveport-Bossier offers, as well as a better quality tourism  
11 product all around, the wider our overall market base has grown.  
12 In turn, this has allowed us to attract more overnight visitors,  
13 more conventions, and receive positive publicity about our  
14 community and Shreveport-Bossier as a tourism destination.

15           We have a great interest in protecting the tourism  
16 market as a vital economic part of our community. Many  
17 businesses in our area have invested and are vested in the  
18 interest of their consumers in coming and visiting our community,  
19 and the casinos are the main attraction that are bringing them to  
20 our area.

21           The gaming industry has become an integral part of  
22 the tourism process in our area which provides an overall  
23 positive economic impact for the betterment of our community.  
24 Each of these parts work together, I think, to make Shreveport-  
25 Bossier a progressive growing community and is developing in many  
26 positive ways. Thank you.

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1                   COMMISSIONER WILHELM:     Thank you very much, Mr.  
2 Friedley. We appreciate your testimony and we appreciate your  
3 being here.

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