

Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Jessica Levin and I have been a Union bartender at Ameristar Casino in East Chicago for almost 6 years; I am a member of Unite Here Local 1.

Casinos were brought to Northwest Indiana with the promise of good jobs, good benefits and a reasonable standard of living for those working there. We have fought to hold casinos to this promise by negotiating contracts with good benefits and pay, including a health care plan that allows us to care for ourselves and our families. With this job, I have been able to earn enough to buy a house and complete my Masters degree. And I've enjoyed my time there – my co-workers and guests have become like family to me.

Yet things have changed fast at Ameristar, the work we have done to make sure our jobs are good jobs is in jeopardy.

Ameristar was purchased by Pinnacle Entertainment, a corporation based out of Las Vegas, in late 2012. Our union contract expired around that time, and to this day, Ameristar has not agreed to a new contract with our union. Now, this out-of-town company is threatening to take away our good, affordable health insurance and implement its own plan.

Ameristar's plan would be so expensive after one year, it would cost me nearly half my mortgage payment. That means I would have to choose my health or my home. And I'm not the only one: Ameristar's health plan would cost some of my co-workers a quarter of their income.

That is not a picture of good jobs, good benefits, and a decent life for people of Northwest Indiana. Ameristar workers want to be self-sufficient. We don't want to rely on the public health system or public aid. We don't want a hand out. We want good jobs. I know you, ladies and gentlemen of the Commission, share that vision with me.

The truth is, Ameristar is capable of continuing to create good jobs. In fact, Ameristar made \$18.53 million last month and was the only casino in the area to see revenue gain compared with the same month in 2014. Now, Ameristar is pushing for an extension to the promotional play tax deduction in the Gaming Bill that is moving through the State Senate. Why should Ameristar get more tax breaks when it is not promising to keep providing good jobs in Indiana?

By threatening our health care, Ameristar is threatening the jobs and standards of living of the people of NW Indiana. And we've organized our co-workers and the community to hold Ameristar accountable. For many of us, this is the fight of our lives. As you may have read in the papers, on March 4th, the people who work at Ameristar called for a full boycott of Ameristar — we are asking our guests to stay away until Ameristar settles a fair contract with us that includes our current health care plan. We are thrilled that the boycott and our organizing has already generated a lot of attention in the community. We are proud that we have the full support of the entire NW Indiana labor community, and we're just getting started, we will continue this boycott as long as necessary and further escalate our organizing until we are sure our jobs can continue to support us. We'll be reaching out to guests we serve every day and making it clear: Do not spend a penny at Ameristar until we have a fair contract, our health care depends on it.

I know you take seriously your mandate to promote the best interest of the citizens of Indiana. We share that goal. So we're here today asking you to respect the boycott of Ameristar and ensure that Ameristar provides good jobs in Northwest Indiana. Thank you for your time.