

Testimony to Judiciary Committee on  
Charitable Gaming Organization Eligibility Requirements  
John Harris, President & CEO  
Prairie Public Broadcasting  
January 10, 2012

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the importance of gaming activities at Prairie Public Broadcasting, North Dakota's public media network.

For the record, I am John Harris, President & CEO of Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

Prairie Public began its service to the region with its first broadcast from a television transmitter in 1964 and since that time Prairie Public has grown to provide our region with public media services that enrich the lives of the citizens of our great state.

Prairie Public maintains a huge infrastructure of nine television transmitters, nine radio transmitters, eight radio translators and robust web and streaming services.

Today, Prairie Public accomplishes its mission to educate, involve and inspire the people of our region by serving as the only local public media outlet for every city, town and rural farmstead in North Dakota. We help to promote the common good and social welfare of all communities by providing programming and services which offer access to arts, history and cultural opportunities to everyone in our state, including those who may be low-income or underprivileged.

The public appreciates and depends upon Prairie Public to deliver national program offerings, but I am most proud of the quality television and radio programming that focuses directly on our communities.

I am sure most of you are familiar with some of our local productions, from the Class B Basketball documentary which aired in 2001 to the most recent Minot flood documentary. These are documentaries that people all over the state watch, empathize with, appreciate and can be proud of. In fact, Prairie Public productions have been honored with numerous awards including two regional Emmy Awards -- best historical documentary for *Homesteading* and best cultural documentary for *A Considered View*.

Currently we are working on an NDSU and UND rivalry show, showcasing the football rivalry from the early 80's and the women's basketball rivalry from the 90's. And we are all familiar with the controversy with Devils Lake so we are working on a documentary on that issue as well. Prairie Public has also taken on other issues such as the methamphetamine awareness project and the youth drinking problems in North Dakota.

We also continue to provide statewide debates on key political races in our State. These are examples of ways for the people in North Dakota to become better informed on what

is going on and hear the story from all points of view. We are proud of our ability to be a strong statewide entity!

Ultimately, education is at the core of our mission. By combining public media's greatest assets with outreach and professional development for teachers and early childhood educators, Prairie Public has made a positive impact on the lives of thousands of children as well as adults. From programs on TV and Radio, to community literacy events, to Teacher Training Institutes, to online resources, citizens are finding a world of valuable learning.

As you can tell, with your support and the support of the people who value and depend upon us, Prairie Public works with schools, state agencies, colleges and universities, private foundations, businesses, and other entities to provide programming and services that have regional and statewide relevance. Families tune to Prairie Public and find the quality programming for which public media is known and trusted.

Prairie Public's first gaming site opened in October of 1981. Since that time, gaming has been and continues to be an essential supporting revenue source for the operation of our media services. And while the gaming revenue does not cover all expenses, it provides an important part in completing the picture for support from other sources.

I have included in your materials our most recent annual report, an educational services handout and our January program guide. In the annual report you can see our funding sources and a variety of programs and projects Prairie Public had during fiscal year 2010.

Over Prairie Public's past three fiscal years, we have paid to the State of North Dakota an average of \$596,000 annually in gaming taxes and utilized an average of \$589,000 annually in net revenue to Prairie Public Broadcasting for use in fulfilling our mission.

In the current climate, we have seen cuts at the Federal level, assistance programs discontinued and even cuts from the State of North Dakota. This makes any and all revenue sources critical to allow us to fulfill our mission.

At the present time, I can report that Prairie Public has approximately 16,000 active members who contribute to support programming expenses for the organization. These citizens are partners with Prairie Public in providing a strong and viable public media entity for our communities.

Gaming is a source of revenue that allows Prairie Public to continue providing robust, valuable services to homes, schools and workplaces across the state.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Prairie Public, I thank you for your time.