



# THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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## Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., places Desert Rock project into international perspective during State of Nation address

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., made his strongest case to date in favor of the proposed Desert Rock Energy Project on Monday, using the majority of his time during his State of the Navajo Nation address to put the project into an international perspective.

The President spent six of his 20-minute address to address the need for the project. He thanked the Council for its consistent support of the project, and for its Feb. 27 vote to approve the project's right-of-way application and assignment to the Diné Power Authority – the last of four Navajo permits needed for the project to proceed.

"The Desert Rock Energy Project was envisioned as a way to make use of our abundant resources of coal, and to bring economic prosperity to our people," President Shirley said. "Simply stated, it is the most important economic, environmental, and energy project the Navajo Nation has ever undertaken."

He said for the countries of the world to end the impact carbon emissions contribute to climate change, the burning of all oil, gas and coal would have to end immediately.

"No one realistically believes that's likely because it would result in a global economic shutdown unlike anything we've ever seen," he said. "The increase in emissions from China's coal use alone has already surpassed that of the United States, and is expected to exceed that of all industrialized countries combined over the next 25 years."

Within the next five years, he said, India and China plan to build 800 coal-fired power plants to meet their rising demands and to power their growing economies but that it is unlikely that those power plants will be designed to

protect the environment like Desert Rock.

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– Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.,

other coal plants that inevitably will be built in the U.S. and certainly around the world," he said.

Coal use is continuing to rise as developing countries of the world grow, he said. It has recently been reported that India will import 100 million tons of coal by 2012 to meet its domestic demand, he said. That is half of all the coal that's ever been mined from Black Mesa since mining began 40 years ago, he said.

He said the Natural Resources Defense Council, a powerful environmental organization that sponsors television ads against coal, acknowledged this month that coal will remain a major fuel for American electricity production for decades to come.

"Desert Rock will be the cleanest pulverized coal-fired power plant in the United States – up to 10 times cleaner than nearby plants for key pollutants. It will set a new baseline for future coal-fired power generation," he said.

The President said Desert Rock would bring hundreds of Navajos home to work on the project, and keep hundreds more from leaving to seek employment elsewhere.

"When completed, the jobs and business Desert Rock creates throughout its 50-year life will stimulate our Navajo economy like nothing else can," he said. "That, in turn, will allow Navajos to remain in their homeland rather than seek economic opportunities beyond their own borders."

"Should Desert Rock's opponents be successful," he said, "all that will be accomplished is that India and China will build 800-plus-one power plants, and Navajo economic dependence and poverty will continue into the future because of it."

The Navajo Nation encourages the development of renewable energy, both on Navajoland and around the world, President Shirley said. But he said it is widely accepted that renewable energy represents a fraction of the energy equation.

"With the cost of solar power at 30 cents per kilowatt, wind power at 15 cents per kilowatt, and coal power at three cents per kilowatt, it is unlikely that developing countries will discontinue using coal to produce electricity," he said. "In the United States, coal produces nearly half – 48 percent – of all electricity produced, and more in other countries."

The President said President Barack Obama has stated his support for research and development of technology

to capture and sequester carbon emissions from plants like Desert Rock, and for the Navajo Nation to become a global leader in energy production, all that's needed is federal support.

"We support that effort, and those similar to the federal government of Australia which last week announced it would provide \$100 million for research in that country," he said.

The President said the Navajo Nation recently learned that New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry had requested a meeting with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to discuss the Biological Assessment for Desert Rock. He said the Navajo Nation, DPA and the Desert Rock Energy Company have worked closely with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service about the project for years.

"I am very concerned, as you should be, that New Mexico's 11<sup>th</sup> hour meeting request is an attempt to delay the project and upset the ongoing federal consultation process," he said. "I am also concerned that neither Secretary Curry nor any New Mexico official has made any attempt to contact the Navajo Nation to discuss these matters."

He said he has expressed his concerns to Governor Bill Richardson and his staff, including Secretary Curry, that the State of New Mexico has consistently failed to engage the Navajo Nation in meaningful consultation on these and other issues regarding Desert Rock.

"I have asked the Fish & Wildlife Service, as a federal agency with trust obligations, to involve the Nation and its representatives in meetings such as the one proposed by New Mexico," he said. "From the beginning, we have worked closely with the Navajo Nation EPA, U.S. EPA Region 9, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to ensure this, to address air emission issues from the project, and to preserve the quality of our natural environment."

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