



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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State of the Navajo Nation address

Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., highlights resumption of BIA consultation regarding Desert Rock Energy Project

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – In his quarterly state of the Navajo Nation address today, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., told the Navajo Nation Council that the Bureau of Indian Affairs informed him Friday that it would resume consultation regarding the Desert Rock Energy Project.

The President said BIA Acting Director Mike Black noted the Bureau’s intent to work with the Nation to meet the regulatory guidelines and resolve issues related to the project.

“Desert Rock remains our Nation’s best chance to begin to rebuild our economy over the long term, generate significant resources for our government and jobs for our people, help us bring our children home, and return us to the pride and independence we once knew as a people,” he said.

The President reported that on March 18 the Nation received a BIA gaming determination notice that 432.5 acres of land had been secured under a land purchase option by the Navajo Nation Gaming

Enterprise. He said the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Indian Gaming Director Paula Hart informed the Nation that the land qualifies for gaming purposes, in partnership with the Navajo Hopi Land Commission, once it is taken into trust.



Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., met for 30 minutes with 9th grade students from Diné Government class of the Native American Community Academy of Albuquerque following his quarterly State of the Navajo Nation address on Monday. He told the students to thoroughly understand the Navajo way of life to apply it to their understanding of government.

Last November, the BIA informed the Nation that it would withdraw the biological assessment it submitted to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Now, the BIA will update the assessment and resubmit it, President Shirley said.

“The acquisition of the Twin Arrows Parcel fits squarely with the purpose of the Navajo Hopi Land Settlement Act to benefit those members of the Navajo Nation affected by relocation,” President Shirley said. “This project, which includes the casino, hotel, conference center and spa, is projected to generate, before debt service and after operating expenses, approximately \$50.7 million in 2012, the first year of operation, with subsequent years increasing to \$61.2 million, \$64.7 million, and \$66.5 million.”

He said the Nation is now negotiating terms of a memorandum of agreement between the Navajo Nation and the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation for the proposed Twin Arrows development.

The project will provide the Nation with a steady revenue stream it needs to fill in gaps in the tribal budget, he said.

He said another important step in the process is for the Nation’s Investment Committee to facilitate full development of the project. He said in order for the Nation to reap the entire benefit of the Twin Arrows project, it needs full funding for the casino, hotel, conference center and spa.

The President also reported that the Navajo Nation had received \$31 million in funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to widen and improve U.S. Highway 491 between Shiprock and Gallup, N.M., and \$32.2 million for the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority Broadband Technology Opportunity Program.

“Over many years, far too many lives have been lost because of dangerous driving conditions along U.S. 491,” he said. “These funds, referred to as a TIGER grant, were awarded after a highly competitive application process. Only 50 applications were funded, and the Navajo Nation’s application was 16th on the list and the only one granted for the State of New Mexico.”

He said the grant award would improve the road to make it safer for thousands of drivers, and provide a major boost to the Navajo economy by putting people to work.

The President said on March 25, the Nation was informed by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of an ARRA grant award to enable NTUA to install 96 strands of aerial fiber optic cable and 33 new

microwave tower sites to provide broadband access to 15,120 square miles within the Navajo Nation.

“This will greatly improve access to Internet technology for the benefit of our schools, hospitals, businesses, chapters and the central government,” President Shirley said. “This award marks a significantly successful effort led by the Navajo Nation Broadband Work Group, the Navajo Nation Telecommunication Regulatory Commission and Office, and the Department of Information Technology. This coordinated effort between the Nation and NTUA will bring broadband infrastructure and 4G mobile wireless technology to the Navajo Nation.”

Testing of the network has already begun in Fort Defiance, and construction is expected to be finished within three years, he said. The award ensures that the Navajo Nation will own vital telecommunication infrastructure, he said.

President Shirley said that after a 10-year effort, on March 23 President Barack Obama permanently reauthorized the Indian Health Care Improvement Act when he signed the Health Care Reform Bill into law.

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act is the key legal authority of the federal government’s trust responsibility to provide health care to nearly two million Native Americans and Alaska Natives, he said. Originally passed in 1976 and reauthorized several times, the Act expired on September 30, 2000.

Since then, he said, the Navajo Nation consistently advocated for its reauthorization. Now, five existing Navajo health care facility construction projects are protected from any changes in the construction priority system, he said. The projects include health care centers for Kayenta, Dilkon, Pueblo Pintado, Bodaway-Gap, and the replacement of the Gallup Indian Medical Center.

The reauthorization authorizes a feasibility study of treating the Navajo Nation as a single state Medicaid Agency. It also authorizes a comprehensive behavioral health, prevention, and treatment program, hospice care, assisted living, long-term care, home-based and community-based care that will be provided by IHS.

The President paid special tribute to the late Dr. Taylor McKenzie, the first Navajo surgeon and former Navajo Nation Vice President, whom he said worked single-

mindedly to seek reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

The President also paid tribute to the leadership of the late Navajo Nation Vice President Marshall Plummer and the late Council Delegate Herman Daniels.

“To his family,” the President said of Vice President Plummer, “he will always be remembered as the patriarch and advisor to the Plummer youth who never made an important decision without consulting him; as a devoted rancher and rodeo competitor who loved his cattle and horses and his many friends also involved with them; and as a deeply spiritual man of Christian faith and the Navajo way of life.”

The President reported that after two years, the Navajo Nation Department of Justice and former Assistant

Attorney General Ms. Dana Bobroff re-negotiated the Department of Interior’s Indirect Cost reimbursement rate to Navajo Nation from 9.78 percent to 18.05 percent. He said the new rate, to be applied back to FY 2007, is worth nearly \$11 million.

“Soon we’ll begin the process of executing agreements for the FY 2008 and 2009 reimbursements for substantially the same percentage rate,” he said. “This important negotiation is worth nearly \$30 million to the Nation, and I cannot overstate the significance of this important effort.”

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