



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo Vice President Ben Shelly testifies in support of N.M. State-Tribal Collaboration Act to strengthen ties

SANTA FE, N.M. – Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly told the New Mexico Legislature's Indian and Cultural Affairs Committee Tuesday that the State-Tribal Collaboration Act will strengthen New Mexico's relationship with its 22 pueblos and tribes.

The law would require:

- An annual summit between the governor and tribal leaders.

"The act will promote effective communication and collaboration between the State of New Mexico and tribes," Vice President Shelly said. "Strong government-to-government relationships are important to the Navajo Nation, and this act would build on the good relations we share with the state."

New Mexico Sen. John Pinto sponsored the bill to improve New Mexico's government-to-government relationship with tribes and to ensure that state agencies collaborate with tribes on matters relating to state services.



Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly, left, told the New Mexico Legislature's Indian and Cultural Affairs Committee on Tuesday that the State-Tribal Collaboration Act will strengthen New Mexico's relationship with its 22 pueblos and tribes. New Mexico Senator John Pinto, center, is sponsoring the bill. New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs Secretary Alvin Warren, right, consulted with every tribe and pueblo as it was drafted. Sherrick Roanhorse Photo

"I have always advocated for better and increased state services for my Navajo constituents, as well as other Native Americans living in New Mexico," Sen. Pinto said. "The bill will ensure the state and tribes work together and work to ensure state services meet the needs of New Mexico's Native American communities."

During the hearing, support came from all state agencies and tribal leadership from the Pueblos of Zuni, Laguna, Tesuque, Acoma, San Ildefonso, and the All Indian Pueblo Council.

- All state agencies to develop and implement communication and collaboration policies to better government-to-government relationships with tribes.
- Each agency head designate a tribal liaison.
- Training to increase tribal government and cultural competency knowledge among key state employees, and
- Annual reports from agencies on their direct services and funding to Native Americans.

In 2003, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson signed the Statement of Policy and Process and Executive Orders 2005-003 and 2005-004 to strengthen New Mexico's government-to-government relationship with tribes and increase involvement with tribal governments in the development and implementation of state programs and policies serving tribal communities.

"In the past, many New Mexico state agencies, such as the Department of Transportation, Human Services Department, and State Engineer's Office, have acted and made notable efforts to better coordinate and collaborate with the Navajo Nation and other tribes," the Vice President said. "With this act, the relationship between the State of New Mexico and tribes will grow and continue in future administrations, as well as provide greater consistency among state agencies."

As the State-Tribal Collaboration Act was being drafted, New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs Secretary Alvin Warren met with every tribal leader and government from the 22 tribes to find ways for the state to meet its obligations to tribal communities and constituents.

New Mexico is poised to be a national leader for tribal-state relationships, Secretary Warren said.

The bill passed the Indian and Cultural Affairs Committee with full support and moved to the Public Affairs Committee for consideration.

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