



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPT. 22, 2008

CONTACT: GEORGE HARDEEN
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
OFFICE – 928-871-7917
CELL – 928-309-8532
pressoffice@opvp.org

Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly thanks Gov. Napolitano for respecting sovereignty, working collaboratively with tribes

PHOENIX, Ariz. – Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly has congratulated Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano for respecting tribal sovereignty and partnering with the Navajo Nation to improve Navajos' quality of life.

“Together, two sovereigns, the Navajo Nation and the State of Arizona, continue to partner to move initiatives forward for the Navajo people,” the Vice President said during a Sept. 18 tribal leader roundtable here. “I commend Gov. Napolitano and the State of Arizona for working with the Navajo Nation in areas of health, transportation, and tourism,” said Vice President Shelly.

Governor Napolitano met with the leaders of 14 Arizona tribes during a tribal leader roundtable Sept. 18 to discuss education, roads, health, energy, and tax issues. There she provided a briefing on the state's economy and how the housing market crisis and current national economic conditions could have fiscal implications for the state's revenue.

The Governor said next fiscal year's budget will be “very lean,” and cost measures will be taken to balance the state budget. But she said she plans to “protect education.”

After her briefing, The Governor expressed support for formal state consultation with tribes saying, “A real consultation process begins before you finalize what you're going to do.”

Vice President Shelly said state and tribal entities should hold quarterly meetings and work to streamline intergovernmental agreements to improve state services.

“More authority should also be given to tribal liaisons so that they can better speak on the state's behalf when they meet with tribal leaders,” he said. “The state should also

“Together, two sovereigns, the Navajo Nation and the State of Arizona, continue to partner to move initiatives forward for the Navajo people.”

– Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly

be about streamlining, not creating additional barriers.” Tribal leaders said there was a need to maintain safe roads during winter months, push for improved behavioral health services, increase culturally-appropriate alcohol and substance abuse treatment and prevention efforts, and find solutions to assist elders with their transportation needs to healthcare facilities.

The Vice President asked that the state support full funding for Diné College, prioritize and fast track Highway 264 for road improvement funding, and provide state funds for Navajo multi-purpose judicial and public safety facilities.

He said citizenship documentation requirements for health services and motor vehicle services are a burden to Navajos.

"We are challenged with citizenships issues, especially those who do not hold a birth certificate," he said. "Tribal identification or 'Certificates of Indian Blood' should be accepted across the board by state agencies as valid identification. We need to continue our work together on this issue."

He said the Arizona "Transactions Privilege Tax," state gross receipts taxes, often are not returned to the Navajo Nation.

"Millions are sent to the State Revenue Department from taxable activity on the Navajo Nation and we never see funds go back to the Navajo Nation," he said. "Funds from these taxes should be returned so that this money could be used to better infrastructure on the Navajo Nation, as well as create better economic conditions for our Navajo people."

On energy matters, Vice President Shelly asked that the State of Arizona assist the Navajo Nation with alternative energy development.

Governor Napolitano said, "We are going to give a big push on the energy front. This energy area is unbelievable. Most of you have lots of land and lots of sun, you can figure out how to use solar energy and connect it to the energy grid, you have a product in the market for a long time to come."

Vice President Shelly also emphasized Navajo Nation water rights.

"Joint water is an important issue to both the Navajo Nation and the State of Arizona," he said. "Water is gold here in Arizona. Today, the Navajo Nation is working with the State of New Mexico and the U.S. Congress on a settlement to quantify the Navajo Nation's water rights on the San Juan River within the State of New Mexico. We ask for your support on this important initiative."

The Vice President thanked Governor Napolitano and the State of Arizona for assisting the Navajo Nation with public health disaster preparedness initiatives, as well as reaffirming state consultation policies with the Navajo Nation, such as one with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

Among the Arizona tribes meeting with Governor Napolitano were the Yavapai Apache Tribe, the Havasupai Tribe, the Hualapai Tribe, the Hopi Tribe, the Cocopah Tribe, the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, the Tohono O'odham Nation, the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, the Pueblo of Zuni, the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, the Gila River Indian Community, the Tonto Apache Tribe, the White Mountain Apache Tribe, and the San Carlos Apache Tribe.