



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Nation representatives attend TBAC meeting hosted by the Oneida Indian Nation in Verona, N.Y.

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Lawrence T. Morgan, Navajo Nation Council Speaker*

VERONA, N.Y. — The Oneida Indian Nation hosted a two-day session for the Tribal Budget Advisory Council that met on Aug. 12-13 at the Turning Stone Resort in Verona, N.Y. to discuss issues and strategies related to the federal budgeting process for fiscal years 2009 and 2010.

A Navajo Nation delegation attended the meeting, they included: Charles Long, legislative staff assistant for Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan; Navajo Nation Vice-President Ben Shelly; Arbin Mitchell, director for the division of community development; and Omer Bradley, director for the BIA Navajo

Region.

As always, the Navajo Nation took a strong position on several issues effecting tribes from across the United States, a stance that was appreciated by TBAC members.

Issues related to transportation, the tribal budgeting

process, the process for carryover funds and strategies for the presidential transition for 2009 were discussed.

Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan explained that the "The Navajo Nation usually lends their support in pushing concerns for vitally needed federal funding for all tribes across the country. As in previous years, the Navajo Nation has been major participants in these meetings."

"Tribal leaders from across the country are provided updates on the federal budgeting process from the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs at these meetings," Speaker Morgan said. "Tribal leaders are provided an opportunity to create and work on budget proposals, budget developments, and a chance to set priorities for the upcoming federal budgeting process."

All 12 BIA regions come to the meetings prepared to advocate for funding for their respective regions and the Navajo Nation does the same. The Navajo Nation is particularly interested in securing much-needed funding for their region for various under-funded projects.

The two-day session began on Tuesday, Aug. 12, with opening remarks from George Skibine, acting assistant secretary to Indian Affairs who replaced Carl Artman; TBAC Co-Chairman Joe Garcia and TBAC Co-Chairman Ron His Horse is Thunder.

Mary Jane Miller, director of the Office of Budget Management with the Interior Department, made a short presentation about the Fiscal Year 2010 President's Budget status and she said that "there are really no changes."



A Navajo Nation delegation attended the quarterly meeting of the Tribal Budget Advisory Council meeting in Verona, N.Y. on Aug. 12-13, 2008. Pictured is Arbin Mitchell, Vice President Ben Shelly, Omer Bradley and Charles Long from Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan's office. (Photo Joshua Lavar Butler)

Miller explained that there will be very little or no increases to the budget.

Continuing budget cuts were serious concerns for TBAC members, concerns that tend to be a recurring theme at TBAC meetings.

Joe Garcia praised all the TBAC members for their leadership in Indian Country and said that "Indian leaders have to be the drivers of change — we have to have and create partnerships to accomplish this."

Garcia also explained the strategy for the Presidential Transition Planning for 2009, a plan that should be in place before the new administration takes office.

Garcia explained that in the past, presidential transitions did not consider Indian tribes as a priority, they had no plan for Indian Affairs, appointments took over a year to be made, issues are re-studied, appointees and priorities did not match the needs in Indian Country and major actions were delayed. When the new administration finally made some progress, it was time for another presidential election, which shuffled up everything and so the inaction started all over again.

Garcia proposed that there needs to be a change in this cycle of inaction. He proposed that presidential transition planning include the identification of Indian Country's priorities early, have management and policy recommendations ready to go, have broad Indian participation in the transition team, allow participation in national policy initiatives, provide short-term actions or 100-day plans, provide long-term actions and sustained efforts, and to identify other crucial areas needed for the inclusion of Indian tribes in this transition.

Garcia also made recommendations that the new presidential appointees should be educated on major tribal priorities, such as: tribal sovereignty, the unique government-to-government relationship, trust settlement and trust reform, law enforcement issues, tribal court issues, funding of tribal services, federal funding issues and tribal revenue generation.

The TBAC also recommended that presidential appointees at the highest levels support Indian tribes, such as appointees at the White House, the Office of Management & Budget, the Interior Department, Department of Education and the Department of Energy — just to name a few.

Qualified Indian appointments should also be seriously considered as well for all federal agencies and he highly encouraged that qualified Indian applicants have their resumes ready to submit. Garcia encouraged all tribal leaders to make their recommendations early.

Garcia also suggested that TBAC members meet with the new president-elect and his new administration, the White House staff, the Interior Department Secretary and staff, and all departments that deal with Indian tribes.

The TBAC was established to help facilitate tribal government participation in the federal budgeting process. TBAC is comprised of two tribal representatives from each of the 12 BIA regions from throughout the United States. Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan and Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. are the two representatives for the Navajo Region.

The group's mission is to provide an advisory government-to-government forum and process for tribes and the federal departments to develop budget requests. TBAC works within the confines of tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, self-governance and self-determination. The group is designed as an advisory council and it was established to reach out to Indian Country for their involvement in the budgeting process.

The next regularly scheduled meeting for the TBAC is on Dec. 8-11 in Washington, D.C.