



Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Speaker Morgan continues strong support for San Francisco Peaks

PASADENA, Calif. – On Dec. 11, 2007, the fate of Doko'oosliid (The San Francisco Peaks) will come before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in Pasadena, CA. The Courts granted the U.S. Forest Service and an Arizona ski resort the opportunity to challenge a recent decision that favored Native American tribes.

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will reconsider the case and this means that they are being allowed to continue to challenge our religious freedom, our environmental justice, and our cultural survival as the First Americans.

A previous court decision blocked the ski resort from making artificial snow from reclaimed sewage effluent. This artificial snow would have been used on the sacred San Francisco Peaks for recreational purposes.

The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) and the 21st Navajo Nation Council has been staunch supporters of efforts to save our sacred sites. Speaker Morgan is a strong advocate of our sacred mountains and thanks all the people who have made the long pilgrimage to Pasadena for the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals Hearing. Morgan's continued advocacy to save our sacred sites will never end.

Speaker Morgan has traveled to Pasadena to participate and speak out on behalf of our mother Earth. Speaker Morgan said that he will participate as a son and as a Navajo tribal leader because of his stewardship responsibilities to advocate on behalf of our sacred sites.

On Nov. 30, Speaker Morgan called upon all people of the Navajo Nation, tribal members of various tribes, and individuals who deeply respect our Mother Earth to join us in a '*National and International Day of Prayer*' for our sacred mountain to the west, Doko'oosliid, at 3:00 p.m. on Dec. 11, 2007.

"It is very unfortunate that this case is being reconsidered," Speaker Morgan said. "We will continue to stand strong and remain unified to protect our religious and cultural convictions to protect our sacred mountain of the west."

"We will continue to practice what has sustained our ancestors from the past, despite the many challenges that we face," Speaker Morgan added. "We have been able to continue to remain here as a people, because of the spiritual prayers of our ancestors. Our prayers will assist us in this new challenge again."

"We must continue to stand in solidarity to protect our sacred sites," Speaker Morgan explained. "As Navajo people, as Diné people, we all consider our mountain to the west, Doko'oosliid (The San Francisco Peaks) very sacred."

“As I traveled here to Pasadena, I could not help but reflect upon a song that is ever so popular entitled ‘America the Beautiful,’” Speaker Morgan said. “‘America the Beautiful’ is reflective of our cause today – a cause to protect our sacred sites.”

The song ‘America the Beautiful’ was written by Katherine Lee Bates in 1904 and has been an American theme ever since. Morgan explained that the lyrics remind him of Doko’oosliid. When people were singing about liberty then, they were seeking religious freedom. This is similar to the challenges that we face as Indian Nations today.

Many non-Indians arrived here in the Americas, because of the religious persecution that they were experiencing. Their mass exodus from the old world to the new world represents their desire to seek freedom to worship who they want, what they want, where they want, when they want, and how they want.

These same privileges should be afforded to the First Americans. Their pilgrimage then is no different than our fight to sustain our way of life today.

Our pilgrimage to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has been achieved. We have traveled in large numbers to support a cause to protect our way of life. We are here in mind, body, and prayer.

“The sacred mountain to the west, Doko’oosliid, is our gateway. We view the Doko’oosliid, the San Francisco Peaks, as our ‘America the Beautiful,’” Speaker Morgan explained. “We will do whatever it takes to protect our traditional ways.”

“The Federal Government and the courts must provide Native Americans with guaranteed protection for our religious freedom as afforded to all other Americans,” Speaker Morgan added. “Our cultural survival is in peril - as threats continue to destroy and challenge our sacred and majestic mountains.”

Speaker Morgan added that Native Americans are patriots of Mother Earth. “We continue to stand here and take a position to advocate for this country. Native Americans have the highest number of active-duty servicemen and women serving in the foreign wars per capita. This is more than any other minority group represented in the U.S. military.”

“We hear countless stories of active-duty servicemen and women writing home to tell Navajo leaders that they are fighting for our sacred lands,” Speaker Morgan explained. “These young men and women are proudly serving their country and representing the long tradition of Navajo Warriors.”

Speaker Morgan explained that “We will continue to be advocates for this cause to protect our sacred sites. This is undimmed by human tears.”

“Selfish gain will no longer be the striving force in challenging our religious freedom as Native Americans,” Speaker Morgan said. “There is great danger in destroying our environment. We must stand united and continue our fight against destruction of our sacred mountain to the west. I thank each of you for supporting this cause to keep our holy grounds protected – Ahe’hee.”