



## The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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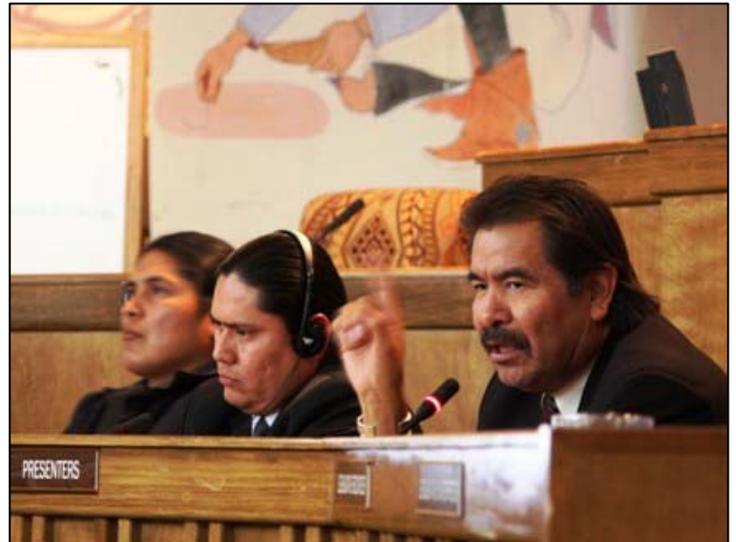
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Navajo Council delegates attend work session to strategize upcoming Arizona legislative session

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Navajo Nation Council delegates from Arizona participated in a work session on Dec. 16 to discuss the focus strategy in carrying out existing priorities the Council had previously established.

The session was moderated by Eric Descheenie, legislative staff assistant for the Office of the Speaker. Katosha Nakai, a lobbyist for the Navajo Nation for affairs with the state of Arizona and an expert on the state legislative process, was on-hand to engage the delegates and answer any questions and concerns.

With Gov. Janet Napolitano stepping down as Governor of Arizona to accept a post within President-elect Barack Obama's administration, it leaves the gubernatorial office to Secretary of State Jan Brewer, a Republican who has minimal working relationships with the Navajo Nation. Furthermore, considering the Arizona Legislature moved to become the most conservative legislature the state has seen as of Nov. 4, 2008, election-day, the discussion focused largely around the need to build stronger relationships with the new incoming state officials.



The Navajo Nation Council convened for a work session to strategize for the upcoming legislative session of the Arizona Legislature on Dec. 16, 2008. Pictured left to right, Arizona Rep. Christopher Clark Deschene, Eric Descheenie with the Office of the Speaker and Arizona Sen. Albert Hale. (Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler)

The Council discussed a Transaction Privilege Tax (TPT) amendment initiative to be sponsored by Arizona State Sen. Albert Hale, D-Window Rock. The proposed amendment would change a law which presently returns local sales tax dollars back to local governments to also funnel those same tax dollars to American Indian tribes within the state of Arizona. There was discussion about how the Council could support these measures to amend the existing law.

There was heavy discussion focused on possibly creating a task force of the Navajo Nation Council to be charged with bringing greater focus to the evolving priorities of the Council to Arizona legislators. One specific focus of the task force would be to pursue the creation of a Master Memorandum of Agreement with the state of Arizona and the state of Utah similar to the Master MOA the Intergovernmental Relations Committee signed with the state of New Mexico earlier this fall. There was discussion on how the task force could assess and study laws that have been prohibitive to the Navajo Nation and seek ways to amend them so they are more favorable for the Nation.

The Office of the Speaker introduced the idea of designating a council delegate to the Arizona legislature to champion the ideas or priorities of the Council, advance the strategy, perhaps in lieu of the task force or alongside the task force. Furthermore, the Office of the Speaker is proposing this special council delegate to be assigned to the New Mexico and Utah Legislatures. The Arizona council delegates were amenable to the strategy, the plan and the proposals.

Arizona legislators, Sen. Albert Hale and Rep. Christopher Clark Deschene, were present and actively engaged the Council in discussion.

The Council will be receiving a report on the work session by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 23.

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