



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



A Navajo delegation met with U.S. Presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama on Friday, February 2, 2008 in Santa Fe, N.M. Pictured to the left is Council Delegate Ervin Keeswood greeting Senator Obama as Council Delegate Rex Lee Jim looks on. In the right photo, Council Delegates Leonard Tsosie, Hope MacDonald-Lone Tree, Ervin Keeswood, and Rex Lee Jim pose with Senator Obama. (Photos by Joshua Lavar Butler)

Navajo Nation leaders meet with Senator Barack Obama in Santa Fe, N.M. to discuss Navajo issues

SANTA FE, N.M. – A Navajo delegation met with U.S. Presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama on Friday, February 2, 2008 during his *Stand for Change Rally* in Santa Fe.

A delegation of Navajo Nation leaders that included Council Delegates Ervin Keeswood (Tse Daa Kaan), Hope MacDonald-Lone Tree (Coalmine Canyon/Toh Nanees Dizi), Rex Lee Jim (Rock Point), and Leonard Tsosie (Pueblo Pintado/Torreón/Whitehorse Lake) represented the Navajo Nation and the Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale).

The delegation met with Obama to educate him about the pressing issues facing the Navajo Nation. MacDonald-Lone Tree explained that the Navajo Nation needs to take any opportunity it has to push Navajo issues.

Though this was not an official endorsement from the Navajo Nation, it provided an opportunity for Navajo leaders to advocate on behalf of issues effecting Indian Country.

The Navajo leaders that attended explained that the Navajo Nation should be supporting all the candidates and should not be endorsing candidates this early in the election.

Earlier this week, the Navajo Nation President endorsed the honorable Senator Hillary Clinton, but that endorsement does not constitute an official

endorsement on behalf of the Navajo Nation as a whole. President Shirley's endorsement is for him as an individual voter only. The Navajo Nation appreciates the work that Senator Clinton has done on behalf of minorities across the nation.

Navajo leaders that attended the meeting were satisfied with their visit with Senator Obama and they were pleased to know that he was keen on issues affecting the Navajo Nation.

Speaker Morgan is encouraging the Navajo people to closely analyze all the candidate's platforms and make sure to vote on Tuesday, Feb. 5. Both candidates, Obama and Clinton, have done a wonderful job in addressing the needs of Native Americans across the nation.

Morgan said that he "applauds both candidates, Obama and Clinton, for their interest in including Native Americans on their agenda.

Speaker Morgan is encouraging more involvement from Senators across the nation and more involvement from U.S. Presidential candidates in Indian Country.

The Navajo Nation should open their doors to all the candidates, Democratic and Republican candidates out there. When it is all said and done, the Navajo government will have to work with whoever is in office.

Speaker Morgan said that the "Navajo support should go to all the candidates, let the Navajo people decide who they want to vote for"

The Navajo delegation presented Senator Obama with a letter from the Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale). The letter was an invitation for Obama to visit the largest Indian Reservation in the country.

Speaker Morgan explained to Obama that our nation has a population of 300,000 plus tribal members, many of whom will have a direct impact on this presidential election.

"There is no doubt that the Navajo Nation will determine the election decisions here in Arizona and New Mexico, both of which are being considered crucial swing vote states," Speaker Morgan explained.

The Navajo Nation and many Indian nations across the country have pressing issues that we desperately want addressed. Issues involving our veterans, health care, economic development, the development of infrastructure, education, and public safety in Indian Country are just a small fraction of the long list of issues that affect our Indian people.

"It is very important that our Indian people hear the voices of our presidential candidates," Speaker Morgan said. "An official visit will be important for the continued tribal-federal relationship that we have established thus far."

"We want our Navajo people and our Native brothers and sisters to educate themselves about the platforms of our Presidential candidates," Speaker Morgan explained. "Our people need to be well informed about the future plans of their presidential leadership."

In his remarks, Obama said that he knows that Washington has certain responsibilities in its government-to-government relationships with Indian tribes. He said that he is committed to advocating for full funding of the Indian Health Service, continued funding for urban Indian health programs, meaningful help for school construction and tribal colleges, funding for tribal police programs and tribal courts.

"The Native American community faces huge challenges that have been ignored by Washington for too long." Obama said. "It is time to empower Native Americans in the development of the national policy agenda."

Speaking on sovereignty, Obama explained that he supports and respects tribal sovereignty. He continued by saying that he understands that Washington's "one-size-fits-all" solution does not work for Indian Country and that tribal communities should be empowered to address their own problems.

Obama also explained that he plans to appoint an American Indian policy advisor on his senior White House staff when elected as President of the United States. He will hold an annual meeting with Native American leaders to develop a national Indian policy agenda.

Obama continued by saying that he will work with Native American leaders to improve Indian health care and education, and will help in making it a national priority.

The Navajo Nation thanks the leadership of Senator Obama, Senator Clinton, Senator McCain, U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, Mike Huckabee, and Mitt Romney. The Navajo Nation looks forward to a future working relationship with all of them.

For more information, contact Joshua Lavar Butler with the Office of the Speaker, at (928) 871-7160

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