



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

Contact: Alastair L. Bitsoi, Public Information Officer

Phone: (928) 871-7228

Cell: (928) 255-2943

Fax: (928) 871-7255

navajocouncil_pio@yahoo.com

www.navajonationcouncil.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Safety Committee selects new chairman, vice-chairman

Raymond Joe selected chairman, Edmund Yazzie selected vice-chairman

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Public Safety Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council met during a regular scheduled meeting on Feb. 8 and elected Council Delegates Raymond Joe (Tachee/Blue Gap/Whippoorwill) as its new committee chairman and Edmund Yazzie (Thoreau) as its new vice-chairman.

Chairman Joe said he will oversee the entire Navajo Division of Public Safety and secure much-needed funding to improve all of public safety from corrections to law enforcement and the administration among other entities.

Joe also noted the importance of lobbying congressional leaders in Washington for more funding for public safety and said, “We will use public and employee input to help our public safety services and facilities grow and become up-to-date. Public safety is going in a new direction and we need to catch up.”

He praised his counterparts, as well as himself, in lobbying Legislation No. 0746-09 for the \$60 million Key Bank loan to be used for judicial facilities, which the Council passed with a 68-10 vote during the 2010 winter session.

Edmund Yazzie is serving in his second term as vice-chairman of the committee. In his previous stint as vice-chairman, Yazzie helped develop the partnership between the Navajo Nation Police Department (NNPD) and the McKinley County Sheriff’s Department on the cross-commission of police officers.

Navajo residents in the McKinley County area of the Navajo Nation now have options to either call the NNPD or Sheriff’s Department as the result of the partnership. The cross-commission gives NNPD full jurisdiction in McKinley County and the Sheriff’s office full jurisdiction on Navajo lands in McKinley County.

As vice-chairman, one of Yazzie’s goals is to construct a public safety and judicial complex in Crownpoint, N.M. The \$60 million loan offered by Key Bank will help fund this proposed project as well as other projects of similar sort.

“The facility will serve the Eastern Agency from Huerfano to Tohatchi to Thoreau to Chichiltah,” Yazzie said. “This project will be my main focus. If we can work with President Shirley and Sampson Cowboy, executive director of the Division of Public Safety, it can be done. I would like to see heavy equipment at the Crownpoint site for construction -- the required studies are done and sitting on the table.”

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The project Yazzie proposes to help construct is necessary for the Eastern Agency which encompasses and will cover Navajo citizens in San Juan, McKinley, Cibola and Bernalillo counties.

"We do have worthless liquor establishments in those areas. It's unfortunate that most of the crimes committed by Navajo citizens are alcohol related. I've been in law enforcement for 15 years and I have seen my share involving incidences of alcohol," said Yazzie in explaining the need for the new public safety complex.

Council Delegate Rex Lee Jim (Rock Point), former chairman of the PSC, said the new leadership will maintain current projects such as lobbying efforts in Washington and continue working with the \$60 million Key Bank loan to construct much-needed infrastructure.

"I have confidence in the new chairman and vice-chairman. Even though I am no longer chairman, I will help guide them along with others of the committee– it's a team effort," said Jim.

Both Council delegates have extensive law enforcement backgrounds and were voted by their counterparts to take the positions with a 6-0 vote.

"We're both ex-police officers so that's a plus. We both wore the badge. We know what's going on – eye to eye," added Yazzie.

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