



## Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**



Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan was a guest speaker at the NMAC Board of Directors meeting on Monday, Jan. 15, 2008. Pictured left to right is Paul Gutierrez, Executive Director of the NMAC; Michael Anaya, President of NMAC; Speaker Morgan; Eric Coleman, President of NACO; Oscar Vasquez Butler, former President of NMAC; and Tony Atkinson, Vice President of NMAC. (Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler)

## Speaker Morgan addresses New Mexico Association of Counties and attends opening day of State Legislature

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) attended the New Mexico Association of Counties Board of Directors meeting as a guest speaker and also attended the opening day of the New Mexico State Legislature on behalf of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council on January 14-15, 2008 in Santa Fe.

Speaker Morgan became the first Native American leader representing a tribal nation or Pueblo to address the New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC).

On Jan. 15, Speaker Morgan also made a brief visit to the opening day of the New Mexico State Legislature, where he was welcomed and greeted as the leader of the Navajo Nation.

The Office of the Speaker has taken a leading role in improving government-to-government relationships with the state of New Mexico, the state of Arizona, and the state of Utah. These relationships foster collaboration with common issues surrounding the Navajo Nation to streamline and to improve the services of all citizens.

Speaker Morgan's visit to the NMAC and the State Legislature are just two

examples of the intense efforts to strengthen government-to-government relationships between the Navajo Nation and all government sectors that work with the tribe.

In addressing the NMAC, Speaker Morgan explained that “as governments, it is our responsibility to bring stability, accountability, and service to our constituents.”

Like the Navajo Nation, many governments do not have the necessary resources to provide much needed services to their constituents. It is partnerships with other governmental sectors that help in providing these critical services.

“I ask that we establish a dialogue and begin a working relationship,” Speaker Morgan said. “Our constituents have common concerns, issues, and problems that we need to remedy. We must begin to work together and address the common problems that our constituents face.”

Speaker Morgan encouraged the Association to support State Legislators that have bills that address the needs of all people in the state of New Mexico and to oppose those measures that are unfavorable to minority people – particularly to the Navajo people.

“I hope that the partnership that we establish today will last for a very long time,” Speaker Morgan said. “We are all working towards the same common goals – why not help each other? We should not think of regions, but be broader in our representation – our issues should not be bound by borders – this is essential for our advances as a nation.”

Speaker Morgan received a standing ovation at the conclusion of his presentation by meeting attendees and Michael Anaya, President of the NMAC, said that “a partnership with the Navajo Nation is very much welcomed – we can work out common issues that we all have – we should work together.”

Paul Gutierrez, Executive Director of the NMAC, added that the Association can partner with the tribe and said “we received a lot of positive feedback.”

Eric Coleman, President of the National Association of Counties (NACO), was in attendance. He chose to be in Santa Fe for the NMAC meeting, despite the numerous requests by other similar organizations across the country. Coleman also echoed many of the statements expressed by Gutierrez and Anaya.

The Navajo Nation shares the same mission of the NMAC, their mission is to work as a united governing body by equally representing the interests of all counties through dedicated elected county officials.

The NMAC represents 33 counties within the state and was formed in 1968 as an organization that would collaboratively work on addressing concerns and common initiatives throughout the state of New Mexico. The organization serves as a statewide voice for all counties in New Mexico and is an umbrella organization for employees and county elected officials.

The NMAC promotes collective action to work together for the progress of New Mexico’s county governments.

The Association provides legislative representation, advocacy, lawsuit coordination, training, general research, assistance in improving the development and administration of county governments.

For more information, contact Joshua Lavar Butler with the Office of the Speaker at 928-871-6384.