



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

Contact: Joshua Lavar Butler, Communications Director

Phone: (928) 871-6384

Cell: (928) 255-2946

Fax: (928) 871-7255

joshualavarbutler@navajo.org

joshualavarbutler@yahoo.com

www.navajonationcouncil.org

January 29, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Council delegates attend Indian Caucus Day at Utah State Capitol, advocate for sustained funding

"With proposed budgetary cuts, it is important as tribal leaders that we are clear about what state programs we believe are most important to retain. It is also pertinent we are clear about what our goals are in terms of strengthening state and tribal relations." – Kenneth Maryboy, Navajo Council delegate

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah. — Navajo Nation Council Delegates Kenneth Maryboy and Davis Filfred (Mexican Water/Aneth/Red Mesa) attended the Indian Caucus Day at the Utah State Capitol to advocate on behalf of Navajo constituents living in the state of Utah recently.

Elected leaders from the state's five tribes met with Utah State Gov. Jon M. Huntsman Jr., Lt. Gov. Gary R. Herbert, Attorney General Mark Shurtleff and a number of program directors to emphasize the importance of maintaining adequate funding for programs which provide direct services to tribal citizens.

Like many states across the Nation, the state of Utah announced major budgetary problems for the upcoming fiscal year and has proposed possible cuts of 15 percent for state agencies. At the caucus, tribal leaders urged Utah state leaders to recognize the limitation in state services currently available to Utah tribes and asked for specific programs to be maintained, despite the economic challenges faced by the state.

"With proposed budgetary cuts, it is important as tribal leaders that we are clear about what state programs we believe are most important to retain," Maryboy said. "It is also pertinent we are clear about what our goals are in terms of strengthening state and tribal relations."

Navajo leaders specified four programs they felt were paramount to maintain to deliver services to tribal state residents. They asked that the Utah Division of Indian Affairs maintain the current staff of three and to maintain their current operating funds. They also asked to retain funding for the Utah Department of Health's Indian Health liaison position and that the Utah State Office of Education maintains their Indian education specialist. Navajo leaders also asked the Utah Department of Community and Culture maintain adequate funding for the Olene Walker Housing Loan Fund, including state appropriations for the Pamela Atkinson Homeless Trust Fund.



A Navajo delegation attended Indian Caucus Day at the Utah State Capitol to advocate on behalf of the Navajo Nation on Jan. 27, 2009. Pictured left to right: Mark Maryboy, Utah Gov. Jon M. Huntsman, Davis Filfred and Ben Shelly, vice president of the Navajo Nation.

"The economy has posed a number of challenges for legislators and they will have to continually address the budget," Filfred added. "But we hope as tribal leaders that clarifying the importance of these programs in these dire times will allow state leaders to realize their importance."

Council delegates Maryboy and Filfred also re-emphasized the need for the state to retain basic services for San Juan County residents, which according to the state, is 58 percent Native American. San Juan County is located in the southeastern portion of Utah and is the largest county in the state.

Tribal leaders also used the caucus to inform state leaders of ongoing projects and issues they would like to see move forward, including putting State Road 162 between Aneth and Montezuma Creek back on the UDOT Project Priority Listing, funding American Indian Language Development programs, addressing the Pelt V. Utah Settlement and the Utah Navajo Royalties Fund, and finalizing legislation related to governing child support enforcement issues.

Clarence Rockwell, executive director for the Navajo-Utah Commission, was also in attendance at the caucus and provided information on ongoing priorities the commission is working on for Utah Navajos. Several Navajo Utah chapter house officials were also in attendance to show their support for their respective communities and for their Council delegates. Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly was also in attendance to support the delegates in their advocacy efforts.

The Indian Caucus Day is part of the state's commitment to create stronger relationships between the Governor's Office and the state's five tribes. Most reverently, the Governor's 2008 Utah Tribal Summit stressed the need for partnerships and both tribal and state coordination in addressing issues confronting Utah tribes.

###