



SPEAKER'S REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

SPEAKER LAWRENCE T. MORGAN

~ THIRD QUARTERLY REPORT ~

PRESENTED TO THE
21ST NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

July 20, 2009

*Y*á'át'ééh, Honorable Council delegates of the 21st Navajo Nation Council, President Shirley, Vice President Shelly, Honorable Chief Justice, distinguished guests, visitors and staff.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2009 Summer Session of the 21st Navajo Nation Council. I am honored to present the Third Quarterly Report of the Legislative Branch of the Navajo Nation, and on behalf of the Council, I thank you for attending the session today.

As always, we have a full agenda this Summer Session and I look forward to the upcoming deliberations. Each of you has received a compact disc which includes updates and the progress on the initiatives of each standing committee, the Legislative Branch and some highlights of your work as Council delegates.

Before I begin my report, I would like to thank all the people who sent condolences to the families of our Navajo Code Talkers. There is no doubt that our Navajo Nation was in shock to hear of the recent passing of four more of our treasured Navajo Code Talkers who all died within a five week period. Code Talkers John Brown Jr. passed on May 20, Thomas Claw on May 26, Willie Kescoli Begay on June 1 and Matthew Martin passed on June 22. We are truly fortunate to have had such noble men—gentlemen—who played significant roles in American history, as well as our own Navajo history. Families of our passed veterans should be proud of the legacies they left behind, the legacies of those who proudly and fiercely served our country and defended our lands, our ways of life and our language.



Honorable Council delegates, on another note, I would also like to thank U.S. President Barack Obama and our U.S. Congress for the stimulus dollars our Nation has received thus far. Projects that have been ignored because of the lack of funding are now being completed. I would also like to praise President Obama for his nomination of Sonia Sotomayer to replace retiring Justice David Souter on our U.S. Supreme Court. If confirmed by the Senate, she will be the first Latina justice and the third female justice to serve on the highest court. So, I urge them to confirm her nomination and praise President Obama for nominating a candidate who reflects the diversity of our great country.

With that, I now shift your attention back to our local affairs here at home. Here in our tribal capitol, the concept of cooperation is our driving force and it has been the focus of my office's efforts to improve and strengthen our working relationships. The Navajo people's quality of life and their well being has been the guiding principle of my administration and my office has made this their pinnacle objective. Our current relationships with agencies are a direct result of our commitment in building stronger advocacy.

With that, Honorable Council delegates, let me highlight a few of the ongoing projects and accomplishments of this past quarter.

Here in the state of Arizona, my office has been working diligently on state affairs. My office has made timely and unprecedented strides in ensuring the Navajo Nation remains toe-to-toe with state government affairs. On April 20, during the Council Spring session, Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer visited the capitol of the Navajo Nation. To date, we are the first and the only Indian Nation the governor has visited. She met with students at Window Rock Elementary School to gain a better understanding of who she will impact as she moves forward as the state's new governor. I commend my office for working closely with the governor's staff in carefully planning her itinerary.

This quarter, my office, in coordination with the Intergovernmental Task Force on State Affairs and the Office of the Vice President delivered a joint statement conveying the position of the Navajo Nation in regards to the 2009 Arizona Legislative session, where the governor and state legislature faced the balancing of our state budget deficit of an excess of \$3 billion.

Our joint statement included a priority list of education, social services and healthcare service areas that are critical to our Navajo people. I commend our elected leaders and staff from the both the legislative and executive branches of the Navajo Nation for producing timely and key intelligence, as well



as the steady advocacy delivered at the state capitol to ensure the Nation's interests were well received and considered.

With this, I am confident that the success of these efforts is being reflected in the governor's recent actions at the state capitol. As you may know, the governor asserted the powers of the state executive office over the politics of the state legislature to ensure that education, in particular K-12 education, and health and human services for those who are most vulnerable did not suffer devastating budget cuts at the end of the 2009 Legislative session. The governor's priorities for funding in the budget are close to what the Navajo Nation has embraced for itself and I applaud Gov. Brewer for her stance.

Albeit, the state of Arizona has moved in ways that favor the Nation and this is but the midpoint at best in the state's budget issues.

So, ladies and gentlemen of the Council, as we continue moving forward, the Navajo Nation will need to remain poised to engage state leadership as the state's massive budget deficit has yet to be balanced. Currently, the state legislature's leadership and the governor's office are discussing the future of these priorities and we can expect this type of discussion to continue to the end of the year.

Honorable Council delegates, you may also recall that my office spearheaded a project to deliver new construction funding from the Arizona Department of Housing for housing development of our Navajo veterans and their families in cooperation with Navajo Housing Authority and the Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs. This effort called for the state of Arizona to adjust how it typically does business in offering funding as a grant—rather than a loan—a pivotal piece to accessing funds that otherwise is incredibly difficult to ascertain.

Through our efforts, I am pleased to report that the Arizona Department of Housing has conditionally awarded \$453,911 for utility infrastructure development for 16 Navajo veterans and their families in the communities of Tonalea, Tuba City, LeChee and Many Farms, Ariz.

Currently, my office is responding to this award with a dollar-for-dollar match, that once completed, will demonstrate how innovation and partnerships with the state and ready resources of our great Nation can achieve mutual benefits for our Navajo people. I have calculated that more than \$1 million will be sufficient, considering the administration costs and capital proceeds of this project, to assist those who have fought for our country.



Now shifting to affairs in New Mexico, my office was involved in the planning of the State-Tribal Policy Summit. Two planning meetings were held for the First Annual State-Tribal Summit, a meeting held between tribal leaders of New Mexico and Gov. Bill Richardson. My office helped to finalize the plans for the pre-summit reception of tribal leaders and the governor, and helped to create the agenda for the summit.

On May 4-5, the summit was held with Gov. Richardson at Sky City Hotel and Casino near Albuquerque, N.M. The pre-Summit reception was attended by tribal leaders, Gov. Richardson and his cabinet secretaries at the Museum located near the old Acoma village. The summit gave New Mexico's 22 tribal leaders the opportunity to express their concerns on four topics concerning tribal infrastructure, tribal economic development, education and healthcare. Gov. Richardson added the topic of DWI to this list as well.

The summit was successful as tribal leaders had the opportunity to voice their concerns to Richardson and his staff. He made certain commitments on how his office and the state agencies will help the tribal leaders address their problems. In accordance with his commitment, Richardson asked each tribe and pueblo to submit one top priority in tribal infrastructure to his office for funding consideration. My office submitted a funding request for phase 3 of the Cutter Lateral Project.

In other projects, this Council appropriated funds for eyeglasses for our Navajo people during the last session. My office has helped to organize and successfully administer this project. In addition to this, three qualified eyeglass vendors selected by this Council turned in their quarterly reports on the progress of their projects.

Our Navajo people have been grateful for these types of assistance and they thank the Council for appropriating such funds. The distribution of the much needed eyeglasses and exams for our people continues and my office will continue to administer the distribution of these grant monies until the projects are completed. We anticipate the completion of these projects ahead of schedule.

In addition, my office has been working diligently to educate the Council on the Navajo Green Economy Commission Act of 2009 and its fund. This information was presented to the Council during a work session recently, a session requested by this Council. Information was followed up during various standing committee meetings as well, where recommendations to strengthen the legislation were provided by Council delegates.



My office has been working to educate the Council on how this commission and its proposed fund management plan will work and benefit chapter communities across the Navajo Nation. This project is grassroots-oriented and is intended to serve our Navajo communities. The legislation was drafted with the best interest of the Navajo people in mind and it carries a vision to help sustain the traditional practices of our Navajo people, the practices that they have lived by since time immemorial, all while protecting our Mother Earth and all her precious resources.

On a national effort, my office continues to be heavily involved with the Council of Large Land Base Tribes. Recently, they convened for a quarterly meeting in Pocatello, ID. One hot topic centered on the issue of eagle feathers. This organization approved a resolution supporting efforts to continue utilizing eagle feathers for ceremonial purposes and to question the role of the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife in a sting operation that was initiated across the country recently. The investigation is ongoing and it began three years ago with undercover investigations into the purchasing of eagle feathers and several individuals were indicted and arrested.

Also, the Council of Large Land Base Tribes has been involved in advocating for the reauthorization of the Indian Reservation Roads program, discussions have commenced on the formulation of funds distribution amongst the 12 regions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, in regards to road inventory and the situation with Oklahoma and numerous erroneous counts of state roads being counted as Indian roads. This ongoing debate to question the methodology of determining funding continues and our Transportation and Community Development Committee opposes these actions.

In other projects, my office continues to work with the Tribal Budget Advisory Council, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In doing this, my office and I participated in a couple of meetings in Washington, D.C. with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, along with other federal agencies in presenting federal appropriation needs for Fiscal Year 2011. Our next quarterly meeting is scheduled August 3-5 in Anchorage, Alaska.

In another projects, I have directed my office to continue working on one of my platform initiatives to develop a comprehensive Navajo Nation Energy Board that will help to administer recommendations of renewable energy products that outside companies present to the Navajo Nation. In recent years, the Navajo Nation has seen an increase in these outside companies and corporations introducing themselves to the Nation, particularly our Resources Committee, for proposed developments.



With the increase of inquiries and proposals, it is important the Nation begin seeking ways to regulate these requests through an energy board that is knowledgeable in renewable energy, which will then make recommendations to the Navajo Nation Council for their consideration.

In other areas, my office continues to work on various special projects and public relations events across the Navajo Nation, where work on behalf of the entire Council and the Office of the Speaker is duly highlighted. My office also continues to support youth efforts and activities across our great Nation and my office continues to pursue research to structure a Navajo Youth Auxiliary that will meet the unique needs of our sprawling Nation and our quickly growing youth population.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Council, locally, my staff has continued visiting chapters across the Navajo Nation updating them on Council business to inform our people about the latest legislative updates. My office also continues to provide assistance to Navajo individuals and families in need. My office continues to see a steady flow of constituents coming to our office for various forms of assistance and my staff continues to do referrals to cooperating agencies to satisfy their immediate needs.

Honorable Council delegates, as you can see, my office has been extremely busy with various issues on behalf of the Legislative Branch of the Navajo Nation. Our work as tribal legislators, as legislative staff, as Navajo Nation employees and as citizens of the Navajo Nation does not end. Our continued advocacy on behalf of our Navajo people will always continue in order to improve the quality of life for our people.

Our advocacy is strong, evident by our position nationally as leaders in Indian Country. Our Nation is continually being watched and observed by outsiders and it is extremely important we continue to push our issues. As I have explained time and time again, our voices are powerful. We, as Navajo people and as Native Americans, have the power to make a positive difference. Our efforts to improve working relationships are tied closely to our accomplishments thus far. It is my belief we are all tied in a political sphere of cooperation.

During this Council session, we will be asked once again to make decisions on issues of great significance to our Navajo people. The issues brought before us this session require careful deliberation and action to bring about the greater good for the Navajo Nation.

The work we are doing today will continue to have a great impact for many years and even many generations beyond our term as Council delegates. We must continue to look toward the future with



long-range goals. I thank each of you for the foresight and vision you contribute to this Council as you consider legislation and make decisions for the Navajo Nation and the Navajo people.

Honorable Council delegates, let us continue the strong voice of the Navajo Nation. I thank each one of you for your leadership in this Council and I look forward to the work we have to accomplish this week. Ahéhee'