



## The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## Navajo Council represented at NACO meeting in Washington, D.C.

*Navajo officials gather to improve relations*

*"I hope the partnership we establish today will last a long time."*

*–Speaker Morgan, in a speech to New Mexico legislators in Santa Fe in January.*

**WASHINGTON** – Navajo Nation Council Delegate Young Jeff Tom (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake) and Legislative Staff Assistant Jonathan Hale with the Office of the Speaker attended the 2008 National Association of Counties (NACO) meeting last week at the nation's Capitol on behalf of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council.

The Navajo Council is committed to working collaboratively and respectfully along with their neighbors in a fashion that beholds just one of the many basic Navajo fundamental ideologies: We help each other.

That commitment of helping each other was evident in the gathering of various dignitaries from all 50 states.

The purpose of the NACO meeting was, in part, to improve and strengthen government-to-government relationships with other leaders, especially with the states of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah which border the Navajo reservation.

Both Tom and Hale were introduced to the assembly by Tom White, Jr., Apache County Supervisor, as they participated in learning and sharing the same concerns of their fellow Americans.

Delegate Tom spoke of the three branch government and how the Navajo Nation functions under this type of government and how the Navajo Nation Council plays a major role in the policy making end of the nation.

They also re-iterated to the participants the concerns of the Navajo Nation and the strong belief held by Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) that he, along side his council delegates remain committed to "working together to address the common problems that our constituents face."

In January, Speaker Morgan was invited to speak at the opening day of the New Mexico State Legislature to members of the New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC) on behalf of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council in Santa Fe, N.M.

Speaker Morgan became the first Native American leader representing a tribal nation or Pueblo to address the NMAC.

At that assembly Morgan said, "...as governments, it is our responsibility to bring stability, accountability, and service to our constituents," and that "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.”

The Navajo Nation does not have the necessary resources to provide much needed services to their people, he said.

It is partnerships with other governmental sectors that help in providing these critical services, he added.

With that belief firmly in place, Morgan sent Tom and Hale to be present at the NACO meetings to share vital information regarding the Navajo Nation.

Some of the concerns and issues shared by both Hale and Tom were the various concerns of the Navajo Nation to the multitudes that included challenges such as transportation issues the Navajo people deal with, gaming initiatives, economic development and social issues that affect all of Native America.

Hale stated that despite the limited amount of time they had to share their concerns with those gathered, they felt “...that the Navajo Nation was there to bring to the forefront the stance of the Navajo people and what Navajos would like to see in working with the counties that they are situated in.”

There was some encouraging news in that better communication with government-to-government, meaning the Navajo Nation and surrounding counties and state officials, has opened the doors of understanding and many issues “are solved.”

Other issues discussed were gaming and how this would affect the workforce on the Navajo Nation and what are the benefits that would be gained by everyone and not “individual wealth.”

“These funds would be utilized for needed social programs, services to veterans, education, health, the need for infrastructure development on the reservation to cater to big conferences and businesses,” Hale said.

As the dialoguing continued, it became evident that despite differences of opinion and the challenges of finding much needed funding for nationwide projects, “the Navajo Nation has a good working relationship with its counties,” Hale added.

Other Navajo Nation officials present at the meeting were Navajo Vice President Ben Shelly, Coconino County Supervisor Louise Yellowman, Jesse Thompson, and Ernest Becenti, Jr.

The National Association of Counties is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States.

Founded in 1935, NACO provides essential services to the nation’s 3,066 counties. NACO advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money.

NACO’s membership totals more than 2,000 counties, representing over 80 percent of the nation’s population.

For more information, access NACO’s website at [www.neco.org](http://www.neco.org) or contact Joshua Lavar Butler with the Office of the Speaker at 928-871-6384.

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