



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Council Delegate receives award for negotiating agreement between Sheriff and Tribal Police

Eases jurisdictional issues between law enforcement agencies

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and the state of New Mexico presented Navajo Nation Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie with a special award last month.

Yazzie accepted the award on behalf of the Public Safety Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council for his efforts in helping to develop an agreement between McKinley County, N.M., and the Navajo Nation that helped combat alcohol-related crashes and injuries.

Michelle Brown-Yazzie, the New Mexico DWI Coordinator, praised Yazzie for his commitment and dedication in providing strong advocacy for the Navajo Nation.

Brown-Yazzie, who works closely with the Governor's DWI Czar Rachel O'Conner, said that Yazzie helped to facilitate the New Mexico DWI Task Force.

"Mr. Yazzie received the award for his efforts to create partnerships between the Navajo Nation, the state of New Mexico and McKinley County," Brown-Yazzie said. "He was very instrumental in getting this agreement passed by the Navajo Nation Council and signed by President Joe Shirley Jr."

Brown-Yazzie also explained that Yazzie has helped to provide public awareness of DWI to the state through the DWI Resource Center.

"Mr. Yazzie is a valuable partner to the state of New Mexico," Brown Yazzie added. "He has educated the state on important sovereignty issues, the government process of the Navajo Nation, and he has been helpful in establishing a better partnership with the Navajo Nation. The state of New Mexico thanks him for his commitment."

Edmund Yazzie is thankful for the award and explained that, "The Navajo Police can now make an arrest or make traffic stops on state land and take action on what needs to be taken. Also, the sheriff's department has arrest power to go on the reservation and do the same thing."

Yazzie (Thoreau) said this initiative gives police officers more safety by allowing tribal and state law enforcement officers the opportunity to assist each other without worrying about jurisdictional issues.

"It's important when our people call 911," Yazzie said. "If a Navajo Police officer is not available, McKinley County Sheriff officers will come on and take action with what needs to be done."

The joint effort negotiation was handled between Sheriff Frank Gonzalez, of the McKinley County Sheriff's Office, Donavon Brown with the Navajo Department of Justice and Sampson Cowboy, Director of the Division of Public Safety.

The agreement is set to last until there is a new McKinley County Sheriff or a new Navajo Police director, at which case the new administration will decide to carry on with the agreement.

"The agreement is worded to where it won't expire," Yazzie added.

