



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaker Morgan and 21st Navajo Nation Council back support of thousands of bikers that rode in interest of veterans' issues

Council sends position statement to Rolling Thunder, Operation Carry the Flame

WASHINGTON — The 21st Navajo Nation Council and the Office of the Speaker presented an official position paper concerning veterans' health care issues to several veterans' advocate groups in our nation's capital Saturday, May 24.

The statement requests the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs to develop a plan to establish veterans' health care facilities within the boundaries of the Navajo Nation.

"The impact will greatly assist the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with their follow-up examinations and health care services for five years after their discharge from active duty," the position statement reads.

The statement gave nine recommendations to the Veterans Administration to prioritize the establishment of a VA clinic on the Navajo Nation, personnel to assist veterans' claims for treatment, assistance with the development of a business plan for a community-based Outpatient Clinic and for the VA and Indian Health Service to partner in the development and expansion of an electronic health record database for health records.

"Navajo veterans have long advocated for a VA hospital or clinic to be centrally located on the Navajo Nation that will allow veterans to have their illness, injuries or disabilities treated locally and expeditiously without having to travel long distance to a VA medical facility," the statement said.

Recent studies have indicated that VA benefits and health care services by Native American Indian veterans are underutilized.

Other issues mentioned in the position statement requests that the Bureau of Indian Affairs help organize and establish a new veterans' cemetery.

Bronson Peshlakai, Public Information Officer with the Speaker's Office, presented the statement on stage to the executive leaders of both motorcycle organizations in front of more than 500 attendees at a banquet held in Washington.

"The Navajo Nation wants to nurture a strong relationship with Rolling Thunder and Operation Carry the Flame for the benefit and support of all veterans' rights," Peshlakai said.

The Rolling Thunder Inc. and Carry the Flame bikers began their trek to Washington from Barstow, Calif. They merged with the Navajo/Hopi Honor Riders for several stops in the Navajo Nation May 13 to 15.

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