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MEDIA CONTACTS
Jerome Clark | 928.637.5603
Carmenlita Chief | 928.255.3428
nlnb.communications@gmail.com

Navajo Nation Council dinner fundraiser for Benally Baldenegro raises more than \$4,500

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Amidst the grandeur of Veteran’s Memorial Park on a resplendent summer evening, close to 100 people showed their support for Congressional candidate Wenona Benally Baldenegro at a dinner fundraiser hosted by the 22nd Navajo Nation Council. More than \$4,500 was raised by the July 16 event.

“The Navajo Nation Council has asked that we support one of our own, a brilliant Navajo woman, who is running for Congress. We are here this evening to help send Wenona to Wáshiindoon to advocate on behalf of our Diné people,” Speaker Naize said in his welcome address.

Benally Baldenegro, a member of the Navajo Nation who was raised in a single-parent household on the reservation in Kayenta, Ariz., is seeking election to the U.S. House of Representatives to serve Arizona communities in Congressional District 1.

CD1 has the largest Native American population of any congressional district in the United States, containing eleven (11) of twenty-one (21) American Indian tribes in Arizona.

Following Speaker Naize’s address, Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta), in signature fashion, energized the reception crowd when she assumed command of the microphone.

“Wenona for Congress!” she shouted. Dinner attendees responded with loud cheers and applause.

As the only female leader serving on the Navajo Nation Council, Delegate Benally knows the importance of electing a leader who can offer insight and opinions from a different and distinctive standpoint.

“We need to send someone who understands us – who has lived the way we do. We need to send someone to Washington who will truly educate Congress about our conditions here on the Navajo Nation,” Delegate Benally said.

As she offered her supporting remarks, Delegate Benally turned to Benally Baldenegro, encouraging her to be a leader who will demand improvement for the quality of life on the nation – listing transportation and schools as priority items.

“One thing I see in Wenona is that she will never lose sight of her being a Navajo and a Native American. She is qualified, and she will fight for these issues,” remarked Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake).

Recognizing the significance of the Navajo Code Talker statue sitting beyond the dinner reception tent inside the park, Delegate Tsosie relayed a teaching often expressed by elders – that the young generations of Diné are the new warriors who use their voice and pen as weapons.

Gesturing to Benally Baldenegro, Delegate Tsosie said, “Here is a warrior that we believe in, and who we want to send to Congress to fight for us. I think it’s very important we do that.”

Overcome by the outpouring of support, Benally Baldenegro’s voice cracked as she expressed gratitude for the amount of belief her supporters and Navajo Nation leaders had in her to create change for Navajos at the national level.

The Diné woman who went away to the east coast to attend one of the best Ivy League schools in the nation and returned with knowledge to help her own people, as well as other peoples of color, acknowledged how the history of the Diné people has guided her in her path.

“When our people went away to Hwéeldi and came back, they came back because they believed in what we have. It’s precious. It needs to be protected. We need to stand up and fight for it,” said Benally Baldenegro, “And that’s what I’m doing today, I’m carrying on the legacy of our people.”

Concluding her speech, Benally Baldenegro reassured her supporters and the Council that she could never turn her back on her relatives – demonstrating a deep respect for K’é, kinship.

“You will always be at the forefront of the decisions I make,” said Benally Baldenegro said.

Winona Benally, Benally Baldenegro’s mother, thanked members of the Navajo Nation Council for supporting her daughter’s run for Congress.

Benally was touched by how council delegates acknowledged Benally Baldenegro during her report to the council body on the first day of summer session on Monday.

“Some of you in the Chambers, today, talked to my daughter as if she was your own child. You stand behind her, and I love every one of you for doing what you’re doing,” Benally said, alluding to the organization of the dinner fundraiser and for their support.

Delegates Benally and Tsosie each encouraged fellow council delegates to work immediately to increase Navajo voter registration for the upcoming election.

Emphasizing what former council delegate Raymond Maxx stated earlier in the evening, Delegate Benally said, “The Navajo Nation vote counts. Get out and vote.”

If elected, Benally Baldenegro will make history as the first American Indian woman ever to serve in Congress.

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