

# Naat'ájí Nahat'á Hane'

Legislative Branch News

Summer 2012



22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council  
Office of the Speaker

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## Contents

- 5 Speaker's Message
- 7 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council continues to honor past Diné leaders with commemorative horseback ride
- 9 Navajo Nation Council dinner fundraiser for Benally Baldenegro
- 12 Legislation outcome and council delegate voting record
- 14 Navajo Nation Council members honor Tom Lapahe, Jr. in building dedication ceremony



## *Speaker's Message*

I would first like to begin by welcoming you to the first edition of the Naat'áji Nahat'á Hane' (Legislative Branch News).

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview of the activities that take place during the week of council session with the overall goal of keeping Diné citizens informed of their government.

My initial plan for this publication is to make it available for the public the week after each regular council session. For the long term, and depending on the public's response, I plan for the publication to be available in both electronic format and print. As we move forward, more original content will be included.

During the week of summer session, there was extra emphasis placed on past, present, and future leadership of the Navajo Nation.

As I mentioned in my report to council, leaders of the past would ride their horse from their homes to council sessions and along the way they would visit homesteads to talk and listen to the concerns of the people they represented. By the time the leaders would arrive at the council session, they would be entirely knowledgeable about the most recent happenings in Navajo life.

Deliberations and decisions were made on the basis of those concerns that were heard only days before. On their return home,

leaders would take the decisions of council back to the people in the same route as their ride to council session.

The anecdote serves as a reminder that it is the responsibility of a leader to keep the people informed and involved in their government. In keeping with that tradition, the week started with the annual council horse ride, which served as a way of remembering and honoring the leaders before us.

Delegates Elmer Begay and Jonathan Nez also participated in bike rides, a new twist on a long held tradition. Delegate Nez emphasized and encouraged youth participation to achieve healthy living. Just as in times past, that message was carried through the nation as the bike riders rode to Window Rock.

On the evening of July 16, the Navajo Nation Council also hosted a fundraiser dinner for Wenona Benally Baldenegro. As most people are aware, Wenona is a congressional candidate for Arizona's Congressional District 1. I feel it is important for Diné citizens and the nation to support Wenona as a future leader of our Navajo Nation.

Navajo people, throughout history, have demonstrated strong leadership based in principles of responsibility and obligation to human life. I believe when Wenona is elected she will be a voice of the people

and she will uphold her responsibilities and obligations.

I ask all Diné citizens to take time out to learn about Wenona's campaign and I also ask that you offer her your support. I truly believe Arizona is long overdue in having a Native American represent our state.

Finally, the Office of Legislative Services building was renovated and rededicated in the name of Tom LaPahe, Jr. Honoring Mr. LaPahe was important to me because he exemplified true leadership during his time on council.

Mr. LaPahe was a leader among leaders and I felt it was only appropriate to name the council delegates' office in his honor. Just as the horse ride honors leaders of the distant past, the building honors Mr. LaPahe's services to his people.

I truly believe that he acted in the best interest of his people and he represented our great sovereign nation as a true leader of the people.

May we all look upon the building and remember the great leadership of Mr. LaPahe.

Let the honoring of past, present, and future leaders remind us all that it is because of dedicated and selfless leadership that the lives of Navajo People are defended and improved.





## 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council continues to honor past Diné leaders with commemorative horseback ride

**R**iding into the fairgrounds on horseback, select members of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council on Sunday afternoon continued a tradition to honor past Diné leaders who used to ride their horses into Window Rock from various regions across the vast Navajo Nation for council sessions.

“The horseback ride was started to commemorate our past leaders who journeyed great distances by horseback to

get to Window Rock during every season of the year,” Speaker Johnny Naize stated.

Former council delegates, Larry Noble and Leslie Dele, initiated the first horseback honor ride years ago when the idea to organize one was sparked by a discussion the two had regarding community development and restoration.

Council delegates participating in the commemorative horseback ride to Window Rock every summer “gain a deeper sense of respect and appreciation for the challenges

that past leaders regularly endured on their journey to the Council Chambers,” Speaker Naize remarked.

Among the delegates who participated in the trek to Window Rock either by horse or bicycle were Delegate Jonathan Nez, Delegate Jonathan Hale, Delegate Duane Tsinigine, Delegate Dwight Witherspoon, and Delegate Elmer P. Begay.



“It takes a lot of energy to ride long distances on horse or by bike,” said Delegate Jonathan Nez, “but it is a good way of promoting healthy living.”

Activities such as horseback riding or bicycle riding helps to combat illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease, Delegate Nez said. He commended all ride participants for encouraging others to live a healthy and active life.

Delegates imparted special recognition to Diné youth bike riders who rode their bikes to Window Rock. Some were a part of a 1,000-mile long community service ride called “Tour de Rez,” organized by the

Navajo Nation Youth Empowerment Services, a non-profit organization based out of Teec Nos Pos, Ariz.

“It takes a lot of energy to ride long distances on horse or by bike but it is a good way of promoting healthy living.”

– Delegate Jonathan Nez

Council Delegates Joshua Lavar Butler and Edmund Yazzie were also in attendance at the gathering of the ride participants at the fairgrounds. Each delivered messages of appreciation for the efforts of everyone involved in the successful event.

On July 16, council delegates departed on horseback from the fairgrounds to the Navajo Nation Council Chambers, where they convened for the start of the Summer Council Session. Delegates, along with other horse and bike riders, were escorted by Navajo Nation police.





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

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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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.

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

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"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."

– Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie

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"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

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.

# Legislation

	Committee Assignment					
	Budget & Finance	Health, Education & Human Services	Law & Order	Resources & Development	Naa'biik'iyati'	Navajo Nation Council
<p><b>Legislation No. 0126-12</b>, sponsored by Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie, would have adopted the Navajo Nation Title 2 Reform Act of 2012 by amending certain sections of the Title 2.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> The council voted to table the legislation with twelve (12) supporting and six (6) opposing.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p><b>Legislation No. 0173-12</b>, sponsored by Council Delegate Mel R. Begay, amends Title 17 Section 412 of the Navajo Nation Code.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> The council passed the legislation with thirteen (13) supporting and seven (7) opposing.</p>			✓	✓	✓	✓
<p><b>Legislation No. 0097-12</b>, sponsored by Council Delegate Danny Simpson, enacts the 2012 amendments of the "Diné Higher Education Grant Fund" by amending 12 N.N.C. § 2301 <i>ET SEQ.</i></p> <p><b>Action:</b> The council passed the legislation with eighteen (18) supporting and zero (0) opposing.</p>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
<p><b>Legislation No. 0100-12</b>, sponsored by Council Delegate Johnny Naize, would have amended the Rules of Order for standing committees with respect to a quorum.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> The council voted down the legislation with seven (7) supporting and thirteen (13) opposing.</p>					✓	✓
<p><b>Legislation No. 0123-12</b>, sponsored by Council Delegate Katherine Benally, approves the acceptance of 45 acres surface rights and 160 acres of mineral rights from the Utah school and institutional trust lands administration and requests that the Secretary of Interior convey the property to the United States in trust for the Navajo Nation.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> The council passed the legislation with nineteen (19) supporting and zero (0) opposing.</p>				✓	✓	✓
<p><b>Legislation 0079-12</b>, sponsored by Council Delegate Walter Phelps, approves funding from the UUFB in the amount of \$2.5 million for the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office for home improvements in the Former Bennett Freeze Area.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> The council passed the legislation with nineteen (19) supporting and one (1) opposing.</p>	✓			✓	✓	✓
<b>KEY</b>	✓ - Considered    ✓ - Final Approval Authority					

<b>22nd Navajo Nation Council</b>	Legislation 0126-12	Legislation 0173-12	Legislation 0097-12	Legislation 0100-12	Legislation 0123-12	Legislation 0079-12
Apachito, George	✓	✓	✓	----	----	✓
Bates, LoRenzo	✓	✓	E	E	E	E
Begay, Elmer	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓
Begay, Mel	✓	✓+	✓	X	✓	✓
BeGaye, Nelson	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Begaye, Russell	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Benally, Katherine	X	X	✓	✓	✓+	✓
Butler, Joshua	E	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Curley, Lorenzo	----	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Damon, Charles	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Hale, Jonathan	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maryboy, Kenneth	----	----	E	E	E	E
Naize, Johnny	S	S	S	✓+	S	S
Nez, Jonathan	X	X	----	X	✓	✓
Pete, Leonard	✓	----	✓	X	✓	✓
Phelps, Walter	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓+
Shepherd, Alton	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Simpson, Danny	✓	✓	✓+	X	✓	✓
Smith, Roscoe	----	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tom, David	E	E	E	E	E	E
Tsinigine, Duane	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tsosie, Leonard	X+	X	✓	X S	✓	X
Witherspoon, Dwight	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Yazzie, Edmund	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓
<b>Yea</b>	12	13	18	7	19	19
<b>Nay</b>	6	7	0	13	0	1
<b>Did Not Vote</b>	6	4	6	4	5	4
	Tabled	Passed	Passed	Failed	Passed	Passed
<b>KEY</b>	✓ Support = +1 X Oppose = -1 ---- Did Not Vote = 0 + Primary Sponsor E = Officially Excused / 0 S = Speaker or Pro-Tem, No Voting Privileges (Only to break a tie)					

# Navajo Nation Council members honor Tom LaPahe in building dedication ceremony

In a building dedication ceremony held early Wednesday morning, the newly renovated Council Delegates Office was blessed and renamed to honor a former long-standing council delegate who passed away last year. The structure is now designated as the Tom LaPahe Building.

Approximately seventy people witnessed the dedication ceremony, which included the family of the late Tom LaPahe, Navajo legislative branch staff, and President Ben Shelly.

Among the council delegates in attendance were Lorenzo Bates, Dwight Witherspoon, Duane Tsinigine, and Katherine Benally. Former council delegates, Samuel Yazzie and Larry Noble, were also present.

In his morning address, Speaker Johnny Naize shared a distinct leadership trait for which LaPahe was known.

“When he spoke, he would stand up to speak. That’s how he led the Navajo Nation Council,” Speaker Naize said.

In doing so, LaPahe commanded respect and captured the attention of those who he addressed, whether on or off the Council Chambers floor, recalled Speaker Naize and other leaders.

LaPahe was recognized for that characteristic so much in fact that the phrase, “Stand Up and Lead,” was chosen to be engraved on the building’s outer sign, which also bears mention to his years of service to the nation.

From 1985 to 2011, LaPahe represented Tachee/Blue Gap and Whippoorwill



Chapters, working tirelessly to foster development and improvements in those communities over the course of his service.

“It makes me happy to have this facility honor his communities, his legacy, his family, and his contributions to this nation through this dedication. He was a leader among leaders,” noted Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon.

Following the unveiling of the new sign outside the building, members of the

LaPahe family were the first individuals to stream inside to view the interior restorations.

LaPahe's youngest son, Johansen, thanked leaders and legislative staff for remembering and honoring his father.

"Today, no doubt, the spirit of our father is here with us. The sun shines with happiness – it's a new day," Johansen LaPahe said.

Though President Shelly arrived late, he told the audience that when he heard news that the dedication ceremony was underway, he could not resist walking over.

The president remembered LaPahe as a "very sharp guy," and stated that when LaPahe spoke, "he stood up for a reason – to be heard."

The Tom LaPahe building houses four work stations, a small conference room, a lounge area, and work space for the Office of Legislative Services staff.

While the general layout of the building remains the same, the installation of wood laminate flooring and the removal of wood paneling were among the more substantial changes.

The building was in need of renovation for years, noted former delegate Larry Noble in his short speech earlier that morning.

"Thank you, Speaker Naize and staff for making this happen," Noble said.