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Speaker Naize delivers report focusing on energy issues during the first day of Navajo Nation Council Spring Session

WINDOW ROCK – Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) delivered a report citing progress on core initiatives under his administration before the Navajo Nation Council on Monday afternoon during the first day of the Spring Council Session.

“We are in a real critical stage in the Nation’s period,” said Speaker Naize. “Our Navajo Nation revenue is at stake, our employment is at stake, our economy is at stake, and our unemployment rate is yet to be decided.”

Speaker Naize emphasized the importance of proceeding forward with the Nation’s due diligence investigation to possibly acquire the BHP Navajo Mine – a move that would help protect Navajo jobs, bolster the Nation’s economy, minimize devastating budget cuts to Navajo programs and services, and help the Nation make a significant step toward economic self-reliance.

“We have a sequestration that we have to worry about,” said Speaker Naize, alluding to impending federal budgets cuts and the impacts it will have on federally-funded Navajo programs. “I hope and look forward to a very favorable solution when we get over this hump that we’re trying to climb over.”

Speaker Naize also touched upon the topic of Navajo Generating Station lease amendments and the negotiation process in his report.

“Although we believe it is imperative that the Legislative Branch remain informed and engaged during the entire negotiating process, Title 18 may not be the proper provision for this engagement,” Speaker Naize reported.

Title 18 of the Navajo Nation Code guides the formulation of the negotiating team tasked with negotiating mineral leases or other energy agreements on behalf of the Navajo Nation. Concerns over non-compliance with Title 18 provisions during the NGS lease negotiation discussions resulted in an “out of order” ruling on the NGS lease amendment legislation during a Feb. 28 Naabik’íyáti’ Committee meeting.

Citing information provided by the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, “Title 18 remains questionable as to its application and relevance to the matters at hand,” Speaker Naize wrote in his report.

In other energy related matters, Speaker Naize said his office has been working with the Navajo Nation Minerals Department and Navajo Oil and Gas to address Utah Navajo community concerns on

the flaring of excess natural gas due to maintenance issues that required the shutdown of a natural gas pipeline.

The gas, which would have normally been directed to the market to generate taxes and revenue for the Nation, has since been re-injected back into the ground. Staff has been working on securing additional right-of-ways to allow for the natural gas to be transferred north to a Utah gas plant, Naize said.

Other topics Speaker Naize mentioned in his report included advancements on discussions regarding the Fort Wingate Military Depot land negotiation talks with the Zuni Tribe, the outcome of the New Mexico gaming compact negotiations, Navajo education, an update on proceedings with Navajo Housing Authority lawsuit, and water rights.

To view a copy of Speaker Naize's Spring Council Session report, Diné citizens may visit:

http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/pressReleases/2013/APR/2013_2nd_Qtr_Speakers_Report.pdf.

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