



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 21, 2014

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253
Jolene Holgate | 928.380.4174
Chrissy Largo | 928.637.5603
nmlb.communications@gmail.com

Council Delegates meet with Arizona House and Senate leaders



Photo: (left to right) Council Delegate Walter Phelps, Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon, Arizona House Speaker Andy Tobin, Speaker Johnny Naize, and Michael Bielecki with Lewis Roca Rothgerber.

PHOENIX – On Tuesday, Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) along with several other Council Delegates, attended the 19th Annual Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day at the Arizona State Capitol, to meet with state leaders to advocate for a variety of issues facing the Navajo Nation.

Among the issues discussed were the state’s budget allocations, revenue distribution from the state’s Transaction Privilege Taxes, the Arizona Corporation Commission, the proposed compact with Arizona to benefit Navajo Technical University, the Nation’s proposed 911 response system, and the AHCCCS program.

During a meeting with Arizona House Speaker Andy Tobin, Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) said the Navajo Nation should receive a fair distribution of the state’s Transaction Privilege Taxes to assist Diné College and Navajo Technical University with infrastructure development projects.

According to Delegate Witherspoon, the Nation currently receives only a small portion of the revenue from the TPT, adding that the Nation should receive an increased amount.

Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) urged Speaker Tobin to work collaboratively with Navajo leaders to fully establish and implement a 911 response system for the Navajo Nation.

Last October, Council members passed an enabling legislation to authorize the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission to implement and manage a 911 emergency response system for the Navajo Nation.

Delegate Phelps, who sponsored the legislation in response to the needs and safety concerns expressed by Navajo people living in rural areas, said the Nation needs assistance from the state, particularly in working with the Federal Communications Commission.

Speaker Naize expressed his appreciation to Speaker Tobin for advancing the Nation's lobbying efforts which brought an end to the Arizona Corporation Commission's inquiry into the possible deregulation of Arizona's electric market, last September.

The outcome resulted in the Nation's successful acquisition of the former BHP Navajo Mine and also saved hundreds of direct jobs at the coal mine and at the Four Corners Power Plant, said Speaker Naize.

Following several meetings with state leaders, Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizi) called the Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day a "success."

"I was able to meet with several state leaders, both on the House and Senate, to talk about Medicare and Medicaid issues and to continue supporting [Gov. Jan Brewer's] initiative and support of it as well," said Delegate Butler.

Delegate Butler also thanked state leaders for taking time to discuss issues affecting Navajo people and said he looks forward to continuing working toward solutions that will benefit the Navajo Nation.

"I really appreciate Senator Carlyle Begay's open-door policy that he's established in the short time he's been in office," said Delegate Butler. "He is able to schedule meetings and bring in decision-makers, such as the [Arizona] Secretary of State and the [Arizona] Superintendent of Education and really begin that dialogue for our benefit and those in his district."

Several Council Delegates are scheduled to continue meeting with state leaders throughout the Arizona's 2014 Legislative Session, which commenced on Jan. 13 and is scheduled to convene through the end of April.

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