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MEDIA CONTACTS
Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Council thanks past leaders at Chinle Justice Center dedication ceremony



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates and Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete attend the Chinle Justice Center dedication ceremony in Chinle, Arizona on August 19, 2016.

CHINLE, Ariz. – On Friday, Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) and Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete (Chinle) attended the Chinle Justice Center dedication ceremony in Chinle, Arizona. Also in attendance were acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan, former Vice President Rex Lee Jim, and Navajo Nation Department of Corrections director Delores Greyeyes.

The new \$32 million Chinle judicial complex will house seven public safety departments including a judicial district, law enforcement, corrections department, probation services, peacemaking program, prosecutor’s office, and a criminal investigation division.

“Council has supported this initiative since 2003 and I am very thankful that the project has become a reality. Today marks a significant step for the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch and the

Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety as they move forward and make progress for the Navajo Nation. Council thanks the many visionaries, planners, supporters, staff members, and community leaders for this milestone,” stated Speaker Bates during his keynote address during the dedication ceremony.

According to Greyeyes, the original Chinle correction building was closed in 2007 due to an electrical fire. Since 2003, previous executive branch administrations and the Council’s Law and Order Committee have prioritized the construction of new facilities for the judicial branch, added Greyeyes.

Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete, who represents the Chinle community, commended Chinle and surrounding community leaders for their efforts and support to build the Chinle Justice Center.

“The Chinle community and surrounding community leaders have done a great job to ensure the safety of Navajo citizens. The community of Chinle is growing and the local leaders have taken the initiative to move forward and make changes. Now, our police officers and judicial staff will work efficiently with the new facility,” stated Delegate Pete.

In November 2015, Council finalized a historic bond financing agreement with KeyBanc Capital Markets that allowed the Nation to refinance a \$60 million loan, which was used along with stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2010 for the construction of the judicial complex facilities in the communities of Kayenta, Tuba City, Crownpoint, Ramah, and Chinle.

“Acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan has worked diligently with the Law and Order Committee to outline the needs of the Judicial Branch including judicial facilities. The new judicial facilities will allow the judicial branch to grow and strengthen public safety services,” stated Law and Order Committee chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau).

Speaker Bates also recognized and thanked Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr., former delegate Hope MacDonald Lonetree, and former Vice President Rex Lee Jim who were instrumental in developing the judicial facilities.

The Chinle Judicial Center is scheduled to open when all occupancy clearances are reviewed and approved.

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