



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation Council accepts report from Speaker Bates on the opening day of Summer Session



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates (left) delivers his report to the Navajo Nation Council on the opening day of the Summer Council Session on July 18, 2016.

WINDOW ROCK – On the opening day of the 2016 Spring Council Session, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council accepted a report from Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) with a vote of 16-1.

Throughout the written report, Speaker Bates highlighted the progress and accomplishments of his Council colleagues and touched on several issues including the Síhasin Fund, Former Bennett Freeze Area, proposed Bears Ears national monument designation, State Task Force accomplishments, energy issues, and others.

Speaker Bates began his report by thanking the many horse and bike riders who traveled over the course of several days over long distances to convene at the Council Chamber prior to the official start of the summer session.

“Each year, the horse and bike riders set out on a journey that not only brings awareness to important issues such as domestic violence, healthy living, and many others, but the riders also honor and remember our past leaders who served our Nation proudly,” stated Speaker Bates.

In regards to the Síhasin Fund, Speaker Bates reported that the Office of the Speaker and the Síhasin Fund Subcommittee continue to work closely with the Navajo Nation Water Management Branch, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Indian Health Service, and others to implement the \$180 million expenditure plan for water and sanitation system projects, which was approved by the Council in January.

The expenditure plan will require approval through the legislative process, which also includes the approval of a loan agreement between the Navajo Nation and NTUA for approximately \$79 million for water projects, which was outlined in the initial legislation passed in January.

The report also highlighted recent efforts of the Inter-Agency Task Force, which is tasked with coordinating and implementing rehabilitation efforts within the nine chapters in the Former Bennett Freeze Area. Speaker Bates stated that it has been recommended that the task force support H.R. 3911, a congressional bill that seeks certain federal waivers to expedite the development of the FBFA.

Speaker Bates also reported that the task force may identify one or two chapters in the FBFA based on the current preliminary requirements that each chapter has completed for development purposes, to implement a pilot project to expedite rehabilitation efforts.

“The task force hopes that the pilot project provides other chapters the opportunity to follow the same path. In the future, I will schedule a meeting with all nine impacted chapters and present them an updated progress report,” Speaker Bates stated.

In the report, Speaker Bates also acknowledged and thanked State Task Force members for their advocacy efforts and accomplishments during the most recent legislative sessions in the states of New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona.

Several accomplishments outlined in the report include the passage of the New Mexico Real ID Act, which was designed to bring the state’s driver’s licenses and identification cards into compliance with federal standards. Council members raised concerns over elderly Navajo people who may not have a birth certificate and may not be able to prove their citizenship under the new guidelines. However, task force members successfully advocated for language to be included in the bill to address those concerns.

Other topics covered in the report include energy, Council Chamber renovation, sacred sites, Navajo Agricultural Products Industry, and others. To view the full report, please visit navajonationcouncil.org under “Press Releases.”

The Council is scheduled to convene for the second day of the Summer Council Session at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday.

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