



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Speaker Bates clarifies misinformation regarding industrial hemp growth

WINDOW ROCK – Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) spoke out on Tuesday to refute news reports that the Navajo Nation signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a company to grow industrial hemp.

On Oct. 24, forbes.com issued a news story entitled, “Navajo Tribe Signs Its First Hemp Growing Contract” in which it states that the Nation entered into the MOU with CannaNative to grow hemp on the Nation’s “70,000 acre farm” implying that Navajo Agricultural Products Industry would be the site for the hemp growth.

NAPI CEO Wilton Charley confirmed on Tuesday that no such MOU exists.

“NAPI has no MOU and/or initial binding agreements in place for Industrial Hemp. We have had exploratory discussions with CannaNative that resulted in actions that need to be resolved before we consider any type of initial agreements,” stated Charley.

Speaker Bates noted that the production of hemp on the Navajo Nation would require changing the current Navajo Nation laws that prohibit it. Speaker Bates added that an MOU would also require legislation to be drafted and considered by Council members.

Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code expressly prohibits marijuana use including but not limited to: possession of marijuana, production or delivery of marijuana, and delivery of marijuana to minors.

“We want to make it clear that certain news articles are incorrect in stating that the Navajo Nation has entered into an MOU,” stated Speaker Bates. “Any such action to produce hemp would require the Navajo Nation Council to amend the current statute and there has been no discussion of doing so.”

Additionally, the Council’s Naabik’iyátí’ Committee passed a resolution opposing a bill that was considered and voted down by the Arizona State Legislature that sought to legalize marijuana in 2014.

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