



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 28, 2016

MEDIA CONTACTS

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

Delegate Filfred provides report at the Utah Tribal Leaders Meeting

OREM, Utah – Tribal leaders throughout the state of Utah gathered last Thursday and Friday for the Utah Tribal Leaders Meeting, in which delegates discussed state and national issues that impact tribes collectively and provided reports regarding tribal initiatives.

Representing the Navajo Nation at the gathering, Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tófikán, Red Mesa) provided a report to Utah tribal leaders regarding several issues including the proposed national monument designation for Bears Ears, the Utah Public Land Initiative, and the groundbreaking for a new medical center in the community of Montezuma Creek.

“These issues are not only important for the Navajo Nation, but it will affect some Utah tribes. Working together, we can maintain positive relationships to ensure that our voices are heard and that our message is delivered to Utah Gov. Gary Herbert,” said Delegate Filfred.

The Utah tribal leaders discussed concerns regarding medical care for incarcerated Native Americans in tribal correctional facilities. According to a written report provided to the leaders, tribal health providers and Indian Health Services do not receive payment for outpatient care of tribal inmates.

Delegate Filfred said the federal government should begin to allocate funding to tribes or IHS directly to cover the medical costs.

“The trust responsibility of the federal government needs to extend to provide services for incarcerated Native American inmates, regardless of what crimes they have committed. They should be afforded basic human rights to receive adequate health care,” said Delegate Filfred.

Delegate Filfred also conveyed his intention to introduce a “Fair Chance” legislation that would aid convicted individuals who have difficulty reentering society after a long period of incarceration to obtain employment, educational opportunities, and to prevent offenders from recidivating.

The Utah tribal leaders also discussed recommendations for the Utah Native American Summit, which will take place in July 2017.

Delegate Filfred informed the Utah Division of Indian Affairs that the Navajo Nation should receive extended time during the summit to meet with Gov. Herbert and Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox to discuss issues pertaining to Utah Navajo communities.

“We request that Gov. Herbert provide the Navajo Nation time to meet with him one-on-one. We have concerns regarding the proposed Utah Public Land Initiative, in which the Navajo Nation was not a part of the negotiations that affect the Utah Navajo Trust Fund,” said Delegate Filfred.

He added that House Resolution 5780 sponsored by U.S. Rep. Rob Bishop (R – UT) would amend the trust fund by reversing the distribution formula, and that there is no indication as to what the trust fund will be allocated towards or how it will benefit the Utah Navajo communities.

Delegate Filfred said that the state of Utah is the trustee of the trust fund, however, it is the Navajo Nation’s inherent sovereign right to negotiate with the federal government regarding any formula change. He said the Navajo Nation would continue to advocate against the proposed PLI legislation, adding that it would also affect the proposed national monument designation of Bears Ears that could potentially take land areas away from the Ute Indian Tribe.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council