



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council members call for congressional support of senate bill to provide additional funding for AMBER Alert systems throughout Indian country

WINDOW ROCK – On March 29, U.S. Sen. John McCain (R – AZ) introduced S. 772, a legislation that would amend the PROTECT Act to make Indian tribes eligible for grants to implement “America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response Alert” systems, or AMBER Alert, on their nations. The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

According to the bill, the U.S. Attorney General would determine when a tribe does not have sufficient funds available to comply with the federal share requirement for the cost of activities funded by a grant for the purpose of implementing an AMBER Alert system, and may increase the federal share of costs if it has been determined necessary.

Speaker for the 23rd Navajo Nation Council LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) expressed his appreciation to Sen. McCain and said he hopes that other congressional members would support the legislation.

“On behalf of the Navajo Nation Council, we are pleased with the introduction of this bill. I encourage other congressional and tribal leaders to support this initiative,” said Speaker Bates. “On the Navajo Nation, we recognize that this is a critical need and we look forward to the passage of this legislation.”

Speaker Bates added that Council understands that this is a vital need, but it has been difficult to identify funding. He said he is encouraged that the additional federal resources could aid the Nation, as well as improve telecommunication infrastructure to ensure alerts reach all Navajo citizens.

Currently, the Navajo Nation is provided AMBER Alert services through the state of New Mexico and covers the entire area of the Nation regardless of state boundaries, however, the Nation does not have its own comprehensive system in which the Nation is able to supervise and manage.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’í), chair for the Naabik’íyáti’ Sexual Assault

Prevention Subcommittee, said it is important for the Navajo Nation to look into implementing its own comprehensive AMBER Alert system.

“Senator McCain’s bill is an opportunity for the Navajo Nation to use federal resources to implement our own AMBER Alert system—it will reaffirm our power to oversee and manage these critical alerts as a Nation, rather than relying on an outside government entity,” said Delegate Crotty. “We have to implement the best system possible for the protection and accountability of our Navajo children.”

Delegate Crotty added that although the Office of the President and Vice President has stated that there is an AMBER Alert system on the Navajo Nation through FEMA’s Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, or IPAWS, they have yet to provide a test AMBER Alert, which she has repeatedly requested.

“I appreciate the fact that President Begay and his staff are working toward an effective emergency alert system, however, we need our own complete AMBER Alert system,” said Delegate Crotty. “I would like to call on my Council colleagues to support this senate bill, as well as all tribal leaders throughout Indian country.”

Delegate Crotty added that the Navajo Nation will seek to advocate for an amendment to the federal share waiver, to have it be determined by the director of the U.S. Office of Justice Programs, rather than the U.S. Attorney General.

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