



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### Delayed birth certificate public outreach events draw large public response



**PHOTO:** Public event held at the Department of Diné Education in Window Rock, Ariz. on July 17, 2018.

**WINDOW ROCK** – On Wednesday, Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) and Council Delegate Steven Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl’a’a’) said they are pleased that many Diné citizens are getting assistance and benefitting from several public events intended to help individuals obtain delayed birth certificates, driver’s licenses, Driver Authorization Cards, vehicle registrations, and other documents that comply with the federal Real ID Act.

The Office of the Speaker in coordination with the Navajo Office of Vital Records met with New Mexico officials and planned the public events. Since the federal Real ID Act took effect, many Navajo Nation constituents, particularly elderly people, continue to experience challenges in obtaining documents such as delayed birth certificates or Real ID/Driving Authorization Cards.

“Many constituents brought their concerns forth to members of the Navajo Nation Council. As a result, the Office of the Speaker and Council members reached out to New Mexico State officials to identify solutions to better serve Navajo citizens. After several meetings, it was suggested that several public events be held on the Navajo Nation to assist Navajo citizens, especially our elders

who are unable to travel to Santa Fe or Window Rock to obtain vital records or to seek clarification on any questions they may have,” said Speaker Bates.

In 2005, Congress passed the Real ID Act that established minimum-security standards for issuing driver’s licenses and identification cards. The federal Act, which is enforced by the Department of Homeland Security, requires states to become compliant by October 2020.

This month the entities began hosting the public events in the community of Crownpoint and Window Rock. Hundreds of Navajo people have sought assistance from the Navajo Office of Vital Records and Identification, New Mexico Tax and Revenue –Motor Vehicle Division, New Mexico Department of Health – Office of Vital Records, and others that are onsite to provide help.

Delegate Begay and other Council members played a vital role in coordinating meetings and discussions between state and tribal leaders that led to the collaboration and partnership.

“We have many grandmothers and grandfathers out there who did not have the luxury of being born in hospital facilities and therefore did not receive a birth certificate. Unfortunately, this has caused a lot of issues for them and these events provide the opportunity for them to hopefully resolve the issues and obtain proper identification documents,” stated Delegate Begay.

The entities will continue hosting additional public events in Window Rock at the Department of Diné Education from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on July 18. Additional events will be held in Shiprock on Aug. 6, 7, 22, and 23 – exact locations and times will be announced at a later date.

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