



# 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council

## Office of the Speaker

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### **Delegate Crotty advocates for New Mexico's proposed Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women task force**



**PHOTO: Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty joined New Mexico State Sen. John Pinto and others to honor Congresswoman Debra Haaland at the New Mexico State Capital in Santa Fe, N.M. on Feb. 1, 2019.**

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – On Friday, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé aháoz't'l'i) joined New Mexico State Sen. John Pinto (D – NM District 3) to honor Congresswoman Debra Haaland (D – NM 1<sup>st</sup> District) through a state proclamation as one of the first Native American women elected to Congress, and for her work in advocating for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, or MMIW.

According to the proclamation, it stated that Congresswoman Haaland's national platform stressed that one of her top priorities during her term is to bring awareness to the alarming rates of MMIW, missing data, and the need to honor all MMIW. The event also highlighted the introduction of House Bill 278, which seeks to create a task force to address MMIW.

Delegate Crotty commended Congresswoman Haaland for including MMIW within her priorities at the congressional level, and said she was pleased to learn that New Mexico state representatives had introduced a bill that would create the state's first ever MMIW task force.

“This initiative will be one of the first of its kind in Indian country. Initially, tribal leaders were notified that federal dollars that were granted to track our missing and murdered were reversed by the Trump administration. In response, this fueled New Mexico tribes to organize and address the gaps in services to improve coordination between tribal and state agencies, and most importantly to prevent the violence and destruction currently plaguing our Native American women and communities,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty said there is a critical need to collect adequate data and promote information sharing at the tribal, state, and federal level to track cases and develop a high-level response to the MMIW crisis.

In January, New Mexico State Representatives Andrea Romero (D – NM District 46), Derrick J. Lente (D – NM District 65), and Melanie A. Stansbury (D – NM District 28) introduced H.B. 278, which would create a proposed “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force.” The proposed task force would consist of members from the N.M. Department of Indian Affairs, Department of Public Safety, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, and one member representing the Navajo Nation, the Pueblos, Jicarilla Apache Nation, and Mescalero Apache Nation.

According to the bill, the proposed task force would conduct a study to determine how to increase state resources for reporting and identifying missing and murdered women in New Mexico. It would also collaborate with tribal law enforcement agencies to determine the scope of the problem, identify barriers, and create partnerships to improve reporting and investigations.

The bill goes on to state that there would be an appropriation to the task force in the amount of approximately \$100,000 to be expended in fiscal years 2019 and 2020, and a report from the proposed task force on the findings and recommendations to the governor and appropriate legislative committees would be due before Nov. 1, 2020.

Delegate Crotty, who formerly served as the chair for the Naabik’íyáti’ Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee during the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council, said she continues to work closely with advocates and community members to increase awareness of missing and murdered Navajo people.

“The Navajo Nation continues to move initiatives forward that protect our women and children, as well as our most vulnerable populations. I appreciate that New Mexico is taking the time to have these discussions and dedicate much needed resources to address this crisis,” said Delegate Crotty. “The Navajo Nation will issue its support in the coming weeks, and we challenge other states to follow New Mexico’s example.

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