



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

## Office of the Speaker

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### **Navajo Nation Council members meet with Congressman Tom O'Halleran to advocate for increased federal support**



**PHOTO:** Members of the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council met with Congressman Tom O'Halleran (D – AZ 1<sup>st</sup> District) to discuss various issues facing the Navajo Nation in Window Rock, Ariz. on Friday, Jan. 18, 2019.

**WINDOW ROCK** – On Friday, members of the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council had the opportunity to meet with Congressman Tom O'Halleran (D – AZ 1<sup>st</sup> District) to discuss critical issues facing the Navajo Nation, advocate for increased federal support and resources, and to address the effects of the government shutdown to federally funded services provided to Nation.

To open the meeting, Speaker Pro Tem Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) welcomed Congressman O'Halleran and thanked him for taking the time to meet with Navajo leadership to provide an introduction to the newly elected Council members.

“I want to thank you for your years of leadership and working with Navajo Nation, and I want to personally thank your staff for being engaged with our communities. A lot of our new council members will be working with you, and I appreciate your honesty and open-door policy. You have always made time for my current and past colleagues—whether it is here on Navajo or in Washington, D.C.,” said Speaker Pro Tem Damon.

Speaker Pro Tem Damon also touched on the government shutdown and how it may be affecting direct services to Navajo citizens. He stressed that the Treaty of 1868 stipulates treaty obligations that must be provided to the Navajo Nation and implored Congressman O’Halloran to communicate the Nation’s message back to Congress.

“Our goal is to set the stage for a positive federal relationship and to have our sovereignty respected, as well as to work with congressional leadership in a bipartisan fashion that benefits our Navajo people,” stated Speaker Pro Tem Damon.

In addition, Council members advocated for various issues such as providing resources for the Former Bennett Freeze Area, reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, reimbursement to the Nation for the Gold King Mine Spill, improving telecommunications throughout Navajo land, and implementing FirstNet for emergency responders.

Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch’izhí) raised concerns regarding uranium mines on the Navajo Nation and asserted the need for site cleanups and reclamation to the affected land areas to prevent further contamination in the soil, vegetation, and water sources.

“We are hurting Mother Earth in my estimation, and studies have been done on uranium. Affected Navajo people are passing on those genes as they grow and have children. It is really a problem and I wanted to bring that up today because we need to have a serious talk about this,” said Delegate BeGaye.

In response to the issues conveyed by Council members, Congressman O’Halloran offered to hold a leadership meeting with the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council and the Office of the President and Vice President to discuss the Nation’s priorities. He also stated that the sooner they are able to establish a list of the Nation’s priorities, he would be able to begin conveying the needs of the Navajo Nation to Congress and federal officials. The leadership meeting will be announced at a later date.

Following the meeting, Congressman O’Halloran held a Town Hall at St. Michaels Chapter entitled “Tom In Your Town,” and he said its purpose was to provide an opportunity for community members to share their thoughts and concerns with their congressman directly. Topics such as job creation, rural health care, veterans issues, water issues, social security, and several other areas were topics of discussion at the meeting.

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