



## The 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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### **NNC Speaker Naize Hears Concerns About AT&T Service in NM**

*Numerous parties complain about diminished service since 2010*

**Farmington, NM** – On Wednesday, Navajo Nation Council Speaker Johnny Naize attended a public meeting of the New Mexico Public Regulatory Commission (PRC) at the Farmington Civic Center concerning poor cellular AT&T service coverage since the telecomm giant bought out Alltel Communications last year.

"I've heard from numerous chapter officials and community members that since AT&T took over Alltel operations they have seen less service coverage and higher bills," said Speaker Naize. "I would think that a world-wide company would have had a better transition for their new customers."

Facilitating the meeting was Theresa Becenti-Aguilar, PRC District 4 Commissioner. A team from AT&T was also present to hear concerns from Navajo residents and officials who were Alltel customers before the company was acquired.

Also at the meeting were city of Farmington and San Juan County officials who each raised concerns that the continuing lack of coverage for their personnel leaves the city and county at unnecessary risk should emergencies arise.

However, the focus for Navajo residents was the higher prices that are now being charged, especially for elderly residents on fixed incomes. They stated that Alltel was very consistent on their charges whereas now higher prices threaten their ability to stay connected.

Brian Tagaban, Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Executive Director added that besides pricing issues the Navajo Nation is also concerned about growing broadband disparity and potential interruption of 911 calls as AT&T adjusts its operations in the Four Corners.

He questioned if the company has a plan for building out service in rural markets which can be very different from building networks in cities and along interstates.

Steve Grey, a former NNTRC Chairperson, also disputed the claim that AT&T is struggling to incorporate their signal with the signal that Alltel used, which may be causing some of the disruption.

"All you guys are doing is protecting your customer base. The technology solution is out there but the decision to employ it is a marketing one."

Speaker Naize hopes that the company will quickly finish its goal of returning the network to its former reliability and address some of the pricing issues that face Navajo customers.

"Better connectivity with others greatly benefits everyone, from education and economic development opportunities to having safer communities and being able to respond quickly when emergencies happen."

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