



The 22nd Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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Navajo Nation Leaders Attend NM Tribal Leaders Summit

3^d annual event includes Governor Martinez and her administration

Pojoaque, NM – Over the weekend, Navajo Nation Speaker Johnny Naize and President Ben Shelly met with New Mexico’s chief executive, Governor Susana Martinez and tribal leaders representing 21 tribes, pueblos and nations at the third annual Tribal Leaders Summit hosted by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. The day-long forum brought together members from Governor Martinez’s cabinet and administration and tribal leaders to discuss needs and priorities facing native populations.

“This is the first tribal summit with Governor Martinez since she was elected,” said Speaker Naize. “The Council and I look forward to developing a dialog with her office as we have several important topics to work through, from education and health care to gaming and economic development.”

During the forum Speaker Naize outlined some of the goals and concerns regarding the state’s American Indian education policy.

“New Mexico is very unique in the make-up of its K-12 student population,” said Naize. “Of the 89 school districts in New Mexico, 23 have a large percentage of American Indian K-12 students, a majority who are members of the Navajo Nation. So you can see the importance that Navajo focuses on education issues at the State level.”

In July, New Mexico Secretary of Education, Hanna Skandera met with the Navajo Nation. Since then, several education policy priorities were identified including improving access to student data, recovering the 20 percent budget cut to Indian Education programs, appointing a new Secretary of Indian Education, and supporting the efforts of our tribal colleges to enhance the education of the workforce.

Speaker Naize also spoke to the group regarding the implementation of health care reform after the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was passed by Congress in March 2010.

“After the Health Care Reform Act passed, then Governor Richardson issued an Executive Order that would create a leadership team that would develop guidelines on how to plan, develop and implement health reform in New Mexico,” said Naize. “We are encouraging Governor Martinez to keep this dialog going as the state approaches the implementation deadline in 2014.”

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As the discussion continued, Speaker Naize also explained their efforts to combine state health from being administered by three different states (Arizona, New Mexico, Utah) into one agency that would serve the Navajo Nation.

“We hope that the State of New Mexico, along with Arizona and Utah, and the Navajo Nation can come to agreement on how to stretch Medicaid dollars during this period of shrinking budgets,” said Naize. “For this program and others, such as Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Mental Health Block Grants (SAMHSA), we believe consolidating administration and receiving direct funding could help even more people in need while being more efficient.”

The annual Tribal Leaders Summit is a result of the State Tribal Collaboration Act signed in 2009 that provides a framework for the state and tribes, pueblos, and nations to work together and address issues of mutual concern. The Act also requires cabinet-level agencies to designate agency tribal liaisons, provide for culturally appropriate training to state agency employees who work with tribes, and provide annual reporting of their accomplishments.

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