



Navajo Nation Council – Office of the Speaker

Contact: Jerome Clark

Phone: (928) 871-7160

Cell: (928) 637-5603

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

www.navajonationcouncil.org

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NEWS RELEASE:

Speaker Johnny Naize attends Governor Brewer's Tribal Leaders Meeting

PHOENIX, Ariz. – Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), President Ben Shelly, and other tribal leaders from Arizona attended Governor Brewer's Tribal Leaders Meeting on December 15 at the Arizona State Capitol.

The hour long meeting consisted of a welcome address from the Governor and presentations from John Arnold, Don Hughes, and Rebecca Gau.

In Governor Brewer's opening remarks she stated, "Whatever your concerns or issues, they are always very important to me and I look forward to our time together."



Speaker Johnny Naize and President Ben Shelly with Governor Jan Brewer after the tribal leaders meeting.

The Governor also added that State expenditures are down, the number of State employees is down, and for the first time in years the State's budget is balanced and there is a positive cash balance. As a result, she added, our State government is smaller and more efficient.

John Arnold, Director of the Governor's Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting, provided a brief overview of the State's budget.

Arnold echoed the remarks made by the Governor but also added that the State's budget was healthier because there was no growth and also added there were budget risks related to Federal healthcare reform, Federal spending changes, and changes in the economy.

Don Hughes, Special advisor to the Governor for Health Care innovation, provided an update on the status of the Medicaid waiver.

Hughes added that the State of Arizona does support tribes in their efforts to receive an exemption from the cuts to optional programs, which are in the process of being phased out by the recently reauthorized Arizona Demonstration Project Waiver.

The State of Arizona has applied for a tribal exemption which is currently under review and subject to the approval of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). An exemption would uphold tribal sovereignty and continue the federal government's trust responsibilities to tribes.

Rebecca Gau, Director of the Governor's Office of Education Innovation, provided information on Arizona Ready and Race to the Top.

Gau stated that "Arizona Ready believes in specific measurable goals and accountability" and they will hold "students, teachers, administrators and schools to higher expectations and intend that they will achieve better results."

Gau also reported that in 2010 46% of Native American third graders statewide failed the reading assessment which is higher than the State total of 26%.

She also added that 67% of Native American eight graders statewide failed the math assessment which is also higher than the State total of 44%.



Speaker Naize at the table with Arizona tribal leaders thanking the Governor Jan Brewer for holding the tribal leaders meeting.

All the tribal leaders in attendance expressed their gratitude to the Governor for setting time aside in her schedule to meet with tribal leaders and they encouraged the Governor to continue holding these meetings because of the significant role of tribal communities in Arizona.

"Thank you for inviting the tribal leaders here today for this important meeting," Speaker Naize commented. "Navajo and tribal communities have important issues to discuss and we look forward to our next meeting where we can discuss these issues in greater depth."

The following tribal nations were also represented at the Governor's meeting: Fort Mohave Tribe, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Ak-Chin Indian Community, San Carlos Apache Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Gila River Indian Community, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Quechan Tribe, Hopi Tribe, Havasupai Tribe, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and White Mountain Apache Tribe.

The next Tribal Leaders Meeting is scheduled for late January in 2012.

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