



The 22nd Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker
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NNC Leader Johnny Naize Delivers Speaker's Report

Window Rock, AZ – Navajo Nation Council Speaker Johnny Naize delivered his Speaker's Report to the members of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council in the Council Chambers on Monday, the opening day of the Summer Legislative Session.

The following is text from the Speaker's Report:

Yaát'ééh, Honorable Council Delegates of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council, President Ben Shelly, Vice President Rex Lee Jim, Chief Justice Herb Yazzie, distinguished guests, visitors and staff.

Welcome to the 2011 Summer Session of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council. To the people of the Navajo Nation I'm happy to report that the reduction transition of the Council Delegates is succeeding and our Nation continues to move towards sustainability.

The Navajo Nation's Summer Council Session began yesterday with the 15th Annual Council Delegates Horse Ride and bike ride ending at the fairgrounds. For those of you who missed yesterday's event I want you to know that you missed a tasty plate of roast beef and music by Bar N. The horses also told me to mention they really enjoyed the hay and grain from NAPI, so thank you NAPI for making the horses happy. I want to thank Darrell Tso, Linda Youvella and staff for making the event enjoyable and successful.

This morning we met in front of the chambers with the riders to pay tribute to our past Navajo leaders and elder statesmen. This event reminds me of our office vision, which says:

***The Diné have given their trust in empowering their Council,
The Diné have entrusted their Treasure to the Council,
Do our actions honor that trust?***

This vision fits the tribute to our Navajo leaders and reminds us in the office that our jobs and action go beyond just having a place of employment.

This quarter has been the busiest of the 22nd Council. While our Council conducted the Nation's business I've been busy making sure we had an operating budget in place. My priority was to make sure the Council continued the Nation's business without any interruptions.

The 22nd Council inherited a budget that didn't plan for the transition costs of the 21st Navajo Nation Council nor the costs of the increased work load for a smaller council. Both of these areas created a deficit to the Council's operating budget. I made allocations from my legislative program budgets, including my own Office's budget, which will turn the red numbers back into the black. The \$2.2

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million dollars appropriated for operating costs for the 22nd Council from January through September, unfortunately, has been spent to recover the deficits and additional work load costs.

These are only two of the many discoveries we've made regarding the reduction of the council from 88 to 24. Although it was commonly thought a smaller Council would mean a smaller budget thus huge savings was thought to occur, the opposite has happened. If the number of meetings, travel, lodging and responsibility of oversight became less then yes, there would have been savings. So, the cost of community representation hasn't decreased and the responsibility of each delegate to attend these meetings has increased; so any savings is a cost to the communities. The increase in Chapter representation per delegate has led to an increase of work load per delegate in the form of meetings. The same exists for our standing committees. Their work load has also increased.

In our Navajo communities the thought remains that because of the reduction, Council Delegates should be more available. This too isn't true! Because our Navajo laws had to reflect the changes, this meant our delegates had to meet here in Window Rock more often and for longer hours. This has left our delegates absent from their communities and meetings. Our Council Delegates are legislators and not project coordinators! Chapter officials are responsible for their projects and overall chapter operations. This is a change that will be hard because it breaks away from the way business has been done before! So my office intends to identify ways to work with Chapters and the Division of Community Development through this transition.

To assist the Delegates in addressing their community workload, my staff and I have identified seven vacant positions in the Legislative Branch that are in the process of being reclassified as political appointee positions. To fund the seven positions we dug deep into the Legislative Branch's budget and identified funds from our FY'11 budget. The paperwork for the seven positions has been forwarded to the Department of Personnel Management. Once approved by them, we will assign the positions to the delegates with the most chapters. With the FY'11 budget, seven delegates will gain assistance.

Next, we have planned for 17 more positions for the Legislative Branch's FY'12 budget which, if approved, will provide assistance to 17 delegates. The seven positions from the FY'11 budget plus the 17 positions for the FY'12 budget will total 24 positions. This is my plan to address the much needed assistance for our Council Delegates and their communities.

The Navajo Nation is in a deficit of \$22 million and I support initiatives that will get us back into the black. We must be a Nation that is fiscally responsible and accountable to our Navajo public. This means spending only the money we have and being sensible about our projections. Let's strengthen our financial forecasting skills by adopting advanced fiscal management practices. It is not my intention to tell President Shelly how to run his Branch but better fiscal management needs to be in place.

Last month, the three branch chiefs had a meeting to discuss the budget outline regarding the Fiscal Year 2012 Navajo Nation Operating Budget. It was ultimately a productive meeting. The President, Chief Justice and I, all advocated for additional funds for our program needs, however, the shared message to address the Nation's deficit as a priority prevailed.

During the Council's Spring Session in April, the amendments to Title II were approved which allowed

us to create five standing committees. Since that time committee business has begun and I'd like to introduce you to the chairs and committee members. We have a **Budget and Finance Committee**, chaired by **LoRenzo Bates**; would you and your committee members please stand. Next, we have **Resources and Development Committee**; chaired by **Katherine Benally**; would you and your committee members please stand. Next, we have **Law & Order Committee**; chaired by **Edmund Yazzie**; would you and your committee members please stand. Next, we have **Health, Education and Human Services Committee**; chaired by **Jonathan Hale**.

The Council created the Nabik'iyati' Committee, which consist of the entire Council. It's purpose is to discuss issues and concerns of the Council. The operation of the Executive and Judicial Branches of the Navajo Government were never discussed.

A number of changes were made in the amendments to Title II. Within the legislative process are some highlights I'll mention.

1. Any proposed legislation after assigned to the respected committee will be made available on a Navajo Nation Council website (www.navajonationcouncil.org) for review.
2. Once posted, there is a 5-day comment period for legislation before they are sent to the first assigned standing committee. During this time, the general public, Navajo Nation Chapters governments, Divisions, Programs and officials, can provide written comments to the legislation. However, please remember that comments can always be accepted at the committee meetings when the legislation is considered.
3. Emergency legislation is now limited to the cessation of law enforcement services, disaster relief services, fire protection services or other direct services required as an entitlement under Navajo Nation, or federal law, or which directly threaten the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation. The emergency legislation must also be a pressing public need and require final action by the Council.
4. Finally, legislation that has been vetoed will be referred to the Nabik'iyati' Committee before Council considers further action.

The Standing Committees have been busy conducting business for the Nation. Here are some of the highlights. The Law and Order Committee has called on sheriffs in the counties that serve the Navajo Nation to create Cross-Commission Agreements to enhance law enforcement coverage.

The result was a Law and Order Committee work session that was held in the chambers last week consisting of numerous county sheriff representatives. The committee hopes to craft agreements with Apache, Navajo, and Coconino Counties in Arizona, San Juan County in New Mexico and San Juan County in Utah.

Council Delegates Mel R. Begay and Katherine Benally, along with New Mexico leaders as State Senator John Pinto, and representatives from the federal government, participated at the groundbreaking for a four-lane segment of U.S. Highway 491. Now construction begins after struggling with clearance issues regarding procurement, tax, and the use of Navajo employment

preference so that our local workforce would be used. We also would like to thank to the help of the former Transportation and Community Development Committee under the Chairmanship of Sampson Begay. It was their efforts to arrange the \$8 million of ARRA grant to begin this segment.

A very important highlight of the Resources and Development Committee was certifying five chapters; they are Teesto Chapter, T'iistsoh Sikaad Chapter, Leupp Chapter, Tsi'diito'ii Chapter and Chilchinbeto Chapter.

The Committee has road construction and improvement as a top priority when they advocate to state and federal lawmakers in Washington, DC. The committee also sponsored a bond financing initiative to boost the Nation's economy.

The Health, Education and Human Services Committee addressed three school reauthorizations. Kindahlichii Olta was reauthorized for two years, Saint Michaels Association for Special Education, Inc. for three years and Jeeh Deez a' School was recommended to be retro ceded back to the Bureau of Indian Education.

The Budget and Finance Committee is preparing to begin their FY'12 budget process. This process is always lengthy and time consuming but believe me they will be in the paper so if you're wondering what they do...read the Navajo Times and Independent. Believe me, the papers will be covering their every move.

The Eastern Navajo Land Commission, Navajo Hopi Commission and Green Economy Commission are true public servants because they've been operating without compensation yet the necessary work is being accomplished. Unfortunately, they are affected by the transition costs of the Council.

Offices within the Branch are working together to establish redistricting plans for the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. They are working on maps and data materials for elected positions at all levels of government. This is in addition to all the work both offices conduct on a normal basis. I appreciate their efforts.

For our Navajos up North, the Navajo Utah Commission continues to work with the communities to assist with the acquisition of grants, delivery of technical assistance and policy training for the seven Utah Chapters. Thank you Utah Commission for all your help.

We want to thank Forest Cuch who has served Utah tribes for over 13 years. His work and dedication to Utah issues is greatly appreciated. Also we'd like to congratulate Shirlee Silversmith as the new Director of the Division of Indian Affairs within the Utah Department of Community and Culture. We're honored to have a Navajo serving in this capacity.

For our New Mexico Navajos we'd also like to congratulate Arthur Allison as the New Mexico Indian Affairs Secretary. The New Mexico legislators are going through redistricting meetings to determine how new lines will be drawn. The main priority will be to maintain or increase the Navajo voice in the state legislator. These new boundaries will assist our Nation when dealing with the state in areas as CIP funds, sacred sites, uranium issues and gaming. The gaming compacts are ongoing with Governor Martinez as she increases her involvement with New Mexico tribes.

For the states of New Mexico and Arizona my staff continues to monitor the Four Corners Power Plant on the future plans of units 1 through 5. The interest is to preserve thousands of Navajo jobs and millions of dollars of royalties to our Navajo Nation coffers. We continue to advocate for tribal gaming rights and preserving our gaming compact in Arizona.

Within my own shop, I am working on building a team that enhances the operation of the Legislative Branch. Within six months much has been accomplished. To enhance the management of the Branch we are developing a management plan and resource documents that makes the legislative process more efficient and implements administrative changes to accommodate Title II amendments. The plan goes into greater depth in providing direction on how to perform daily operations more effectively. Ordinarily this would be a three year project costing tens of thousands of dollars to support a team of consultants but we've almost accomplished this task in six months because of the long hours and weekends dedicated by my staff. Such plans and resources include a Council Delegate's Handbook, increased Council Delegate's office space, professional development training for legislative staff and a public records management system.

My staff has worked tirelessly to set this aggressive and ambitious agenda to build a professional branch. The staff has managed through the maze of changes that occurred over the last six months while also attending to my directives and yours. Also, each staff member is assigned to issue areas and three are following local, state and federal issues. Anthony Peterman follows Utah, Jarvis Williams follows New Mexico and Eric Descheenie follows Arizona.

With respect to my advocacy for Navajo Veterans, I'm supporting the establishment of a National Guard Unit on the Navajo Nation. Right now we are in the early stages of planning for a unit to be based near Chinle, Arizona. Other projects we are working on include a Veterans Health Care Facility, Veterans Housing, VA Behavioral Mental Health and Counseling and a National Veterans Cemetery.

Last month, here at home, we lost a brave and dedicated public servant who tirelessly worked to ensure our communities remained safe. I'm sure we were all shocked and saddened when we heard the news of the death of Navajo Nation Police Sergeant Darrell Curley who was shot responding to a call last month in Kaibeto. I ask the Council to join with me with prayers, appreciation and a moment of silence to honor his service to the Navajo people.

Let us comfort his family, friends and his colleagues during this time of extreme loss. His sacrifice will not be forgotten. Let this serve as a reminder to us, the Council, that we must recommend adequate resources be made available to support our Law Enforcement personnel and their efforts to protect our Navajo communities.

I want to thank the Delegates for all their hard work during this quarter and the enthusiasm they are showing as their committees get started with their agendas. We will continue to fine tune the Title II amendments so that the business of the Legislative Branch is not slowed by bureaucracy and to educate the public about Title II. To this end my office intends to conduct training within the next three weeks.

We will continue to work with the other two branches and will produce a budget that will assist the Navajo people and their communities. Now let's get back to work!!

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