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Gov. Jan Brewer visits 64th Navajo Nation Fair, signs support letter for development of Twin Arrows Casino and Resort

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Gov. Jan Brewer paid a special visit to the 64th Annual Navajo Nation Fair today and signed an unexpected support letter addressed to the Bureau of Indian Affairs on behalf of Arizona expressing her support for the Navajo Nation’s application to turn lands into tribal trust for the development of the Twin Arrows Casino and Resort near Flagstaff, Ariz. The governor’s support letter is not necessary but certainly welcomed and is very helpful in the acquisition of lands.

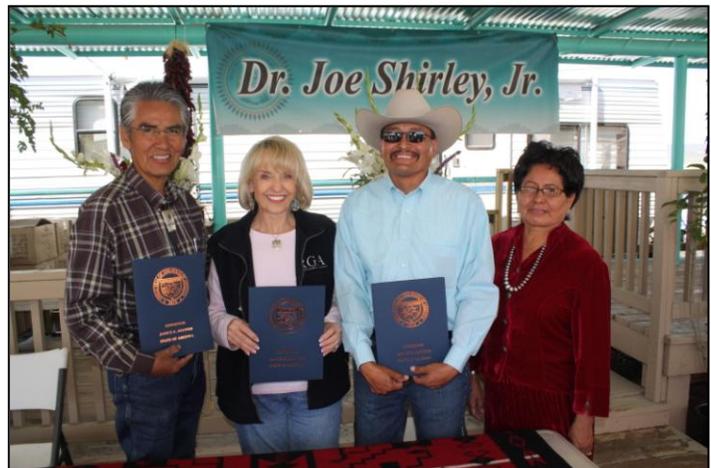
“The Navajo Nation has worked in good faith with all interested parties, including making alternate land selections, changing design specifications, creating environmentally conscious plans, agreeing to abide by a local dark skies ordinance, and initiating conversations about infrastructure support,” Gov. Brewer said, in her support letter to the BIA. “The Navajo Nation did this all in an effort to begin its new business on positive footing.”

Honorable Council delegates Leonard Chee and Evelyn Acothley received and assisted the governor on her visit to the Navajo Nation. Both Council members accompanied the governor to Navajo President Joe Shirley’s pavilion on the fair grounds where the signing ceremony took place.

The signing ceremony was also witnessed by the Navajo people.

“While I have not always agreed with tribal plans to operate gaming establishments, I understand my legal responsibilities as Governor under the Arizona gaming compacts and the Navajo Nation’s right to self-determination,” added Gov. Brewer. “I have been both impressed by the sensitivity the Navajo Nation has showed for its neighbors and with the careful planning its leaders have engaged in prior to identifying, acquiring, and designing the Twin Arrows site.”

“As Governor, I commend Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., the Navajo Nation Council, and leaders of the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise for their cooperative inter-governmental approach,” said Gov. Brewer. “The Twin Arrows development is anticipated to bring more than 1,000 construction jobs to the area and to drive demand for temporary housing. This is expected to create a significant economic boom for the area.”



Top picture: President Shirley, Gov. Brewer, Honorable Leonard Chee and Honorable Evelyn Acothley pose for a picture after the signing of the governor’s support letter at the president’s pavilion. Right Picture: President Shirley, Gov. Brewer, Honorable Chee and Honorable Acothley walk the grounds of the 64th Navajo Nation Fair. (Photos by Alastair Lee Bitsoi)



In addition to the Office of the President, Council and Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, the Navajo Hopi Land Commission played an integral role in identifying lands for the development of the Twin Arrows Casino and Resort. Both Honorable Chee and Honorable Acothley are members of the Navajo Hopi Land Commission's effort to provide economic development opportunities to the western region of the Navajo Nation.

"In the Western Navajo Agency, particularly the former Bennett Freeze area housing is a number one priority," Honorable Acothley said. "The Navajo Nation needs to work on partnerships with the state of Arizona, county, and federal levels for housing development. The support letter signed by Gov. Jan Brewer today is a true working relationship between two sovereign governments, which will help with our efforts in providing much needed housing for this portion of the Navajo Nation."

Pursuant to the Navajo Hopi Settlement Act Amendments of 1980, the Navajo Hopi Land Commission is delegated authority through Navajo Nation Council Resolution CN-69-80 to act and speak for the Navajo Nation "with respect to land selection and land exchange provisions" for the development of Twin Arrows Casino and Resort, which Gov. Brewer supports.

The type of lands the Navajo Hopi Land Commission recommends for selection are: lands with economic development potential, including potential to provide sustainable income to Navajo relocatee beneficiaries, and lands that "address special needs of the beneficiaries and affected communities including but not limited to the preservation of cultural resources, control of liquor establishments" and land as home sites for those who have been displaced from their first relocation sites.

Honorable Chee, also a member of the Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Subcommittee on Gaming and Taskforce on State Affairs, said the support letter from the governor is encouraging and is appreciated.

"I serve on the IGR Taskforce on State Affairs and it has been encouraging to work with the governor's staff, in particular Katosha Nakai," said Honorable Chee. "The support letter is appreciative in our effort to acquire lands into tribal trust for the development of Twin Arrows Casino and Resort. I thank the governor for her visit and her initiative to work with the Navajo Nation on a government-to-government basis."

On her visit, the governor also had the chance to participate in the Navajo song-and-dance where two rounds of songs were dedicated to her; she attended the rodeo with both Council delegates and the president, and shopped with Councilwoman Acothley for jewelry at the Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise.

"As a member of the Health and Social Services Committee, I was happy to receive and accompany the governor knowing she values behavioral health and the challenge of being a woman and parent in leadership positions," added Honorable Acothley.



Top picture: Gov. Brewer, Honorable Acothley and Honorable Chee dancing with their partners at the Navajo Song-and-dance arena. Bottom picture: Gov. Brewer tries on jewelry with the assistance of Honorable Acothley at the Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise. (Photos by Alastair Lee Bitsoi)