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President Shelly Says Arizona Needs an Indian Affairs Department

PHOENIX – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly said Arizona needs to create a Department of Indian Affairs.

The President made his statement during the Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day today.

President Shelly stated a similar message to Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer during an afternoon meeting.

“To enter into a new realm of collaboration, we must create an Indian Affairs Department in the state of Arizona,” President Shelly said.

President Shelly was one of three tribal leaders who addressed the joint session of the state legislature. The President spoke for 11 minutes.

President Shelly addressed the joint Arizona legislature for 11 minutes stating that the state needed to create an Indian Affairs Department.

President Shelly also reiterated the same message to Gov. Brewer in an afternoon round table meeting.

“Too many opportunities for job growth have been lost because we can’t communicate to the state’s highest leaders,” President Shelly said in the afternoon meeting that lasted about an hour and a half.

“If we did have a Department of Indian Affairs, we could come to this department with our concerns about gaming, the state budget and economic development,” the President added.

Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day

President Shelly addressed a joint session of the Arizona legislature today and asked for support for some of the Navajo Nation's issues.

His message focused on the need for the state to engage in meaningful collaboration with the Navajo Nation.

"We talk all the time about what we want as people, now its time to do this as leaders," President Shelly said.

President Shelly asked for support for some key Navajo Nation issues.

"We need support for Navajo Generating Station," the President said. "The U.S. EPA is proposing new technologies that could close the plant and put 500 people out of work."

He also asked for support to obtain the necessary permits needed to begin construction of the Big Boquillas Wind Project.

President Shelly also stated a successful project that came out of meaningful consultation.

The Diné College, Navajo Nation and Arizona compact has provided Diné College with \$1.5 million in infrastructure improvement funding.

"Thank you for your support because our students are now becoming more successful," he said.

Gov. Brewer Round Table

Aside for advocating for a Department of Indian Affairs, President Shelly also proposed tax ideas to Gov. Brewer.

President Shelly said business growth on the Navajo Nation could be spurred if the transaction privilege tax (TPT) could be credited for businesses on the Navajo Nation.

Businesses on the Navajo Nation face dual taxes, the TPT and Navajo Nation taxes.

"Let's provide a portion of the TPT to the Navajo Nation. Perhaps we can create a tax credit against the TPT," the President said.

The President also advocated for his support to extend the state's one-cent sales tax that is set to expire this in May.

Also, President Shelly asked the Gov. Brewer to halt new gaming compacts.

"I respectfully request no further expansion of gaming," President Shelly stated. "We are asking that the state not expand gaming into private interests."

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