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President Shelly Speaks of Unity Before NM Joint House

SANTA FE, N.M. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly delivered a message of unity while outlining different bills he supports during an address to the New Mexico Joint Legislative Session Friday afternoon.

“We must find new ways to partner and address issues that are important to our constituents. We must grow our economies, create jobs, and build infrastructure, while maintaining basic services. Let’s all work together and do our best to serve the people that put us here. We owe it to them,” Shelly said during a 10 minute speech.

Shelly was one of a handful of tribal leaders who spoke during the New Mexico American Indian in Santa Fe.

President Shelly also outlined some bills in the New Mexico legislature that he supports.

Senate Bill 76 would appropriate \$1.44 million to New Mexico State University so they can grow fresh produce. Then the New Mexico Department of Agriculture would buy the fresh fruits and vegetables for distribution throughout the state for school lunches.

“We have Navajo Agriculture Products Industries that grows fresh produce, and I see a partnership that could serve both our interests, if this measure passed,” President Shelly said, adding that other Navajo Nation enterprises could be utilized to help some state projects.

President Shelly also offered his support to House Bill 28, which would allow students at tribal colleges to qualify for New Mexico’s Lottery Scholarship. Under current provisions, students who attend tribally owned colleges can’t qualify for the scholarship.

“We contribute to the lottery and our students should have the same opportunities as other young scholars in New Mexico,” President Shelly said as the audience applauded.

Similar bills have been introduced in previous years, but have yet to be introduced to the floor, thus killing the bill.

President Shelly also lent his support to a portion capital outlay funding that would provide funding to build homes for veterans.

“We must care for our veterans by providing housing. They sacrificed so much to provide our safety, so it is our responsibility to do as much as we can to help them,” President Shelly said.

President Shelly also extended his gratitude to Rep. Carl Trujillo for working with the Navajo Nation to make changes to House Bill 306, which would’ve made it more difficult to cross commission Navajo police officers with New Mexico law enforcement agencies.

“We know Representative Trujillo has the vested interested in public safety for all our communities and counties. Thank you for understanding the position of the Navajo Nation,” President Shelly said.

He closed his remarks by reminding leaders that to make the best progress, the leaders have to work together.

“In that spirit, let us continue to work together. The challenges we face could be better met if we work in a unified manner. Now is the time we must work together and see how we can find creative ways to establish new partnerships that serve all of our communities,” President Shelly said.

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