

THE STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION

President Ben Shelly

and

Vice President Rex Lee Jim



The Executive Branch Report

Presented to the
23rd Navajo Nation Council
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2015 WINTER SESSION STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT BEN SHELLY AND VICE PRESIDENT REX LEE JIM JANUARY 26, 2015

Mr. Speaker, members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, visitors, and my fellow Navajo people:

Yá'át'ééh! Thank you for joining us today. Let's welcome our new Navajo Nation Council for the start of the 2015 winter session. These leaders will join the long and distinguished list of leaders that gathered inside this historic chamber to create laws for the Navajo people.

Vice President Jim and I are very honored to join you here today. The Vice President and I are prepared to provide continuity of government.

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING NO. 1 RENOVATIONS

We are proud to announce that Administration Building No. 1 is open for business. Many of our displaced tribal employees are now back inside the renovated building and providing direct services to the Navajo people. They have endured many challenges over the past two years, as we worked with the Council to identify funding to begin construction.

Remediation began on Sept. 15, 2011, when black mold was discovered as the cause of the many health issues affecting tribal employees in the building. We had to close the building down immediately to begin remediation. Lack of maintenance resulted in water leaking into the walls and causing black mold.

Several tribal divisions and departments stepped up to the plate and housed our displaced employees until the building could be renovated. Funding from the UUF, indirect cost and carryover funds were utilized to cover the more than \$5.5 million in construction costs. We worked with our legislators in the Council to address this legacy issue that other administrations chose to ignore.

The health and welfare of our tribal employees was the primary concern. Renovations have already begun on Administration Building No. 2 and we anticipate construction to be in full swing by Spring 2015.

APPROVAL OF \$8.3 MILLION IN SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

On Jan. 6, I approved more than \$8.3 million in supplemental funding for several chapter



projects. Some of these projects were not in compliance with the Appropriations Act, but we worked around that to approve the projects because of their importance to their respective chapters.

However, we must be clear here: all projects selected for funding must be in compliance with the Appropriations Act. Furthermore, they must also be listed on the five-year CIP plan that was approved last summer after 14 long years of waiting. The more than \$30 million that was saved in the UUFB has allowed these supplemental funding requests to be funded.

\$500,000 from the UUFB will go to the Oljato Chapter for professional technical services and architecture for the design of the new multipurpose building. \$5 million will go to the Nahata Dzil Shopping Center. This was added as an amendment to the legislation. \$500,000 will go to the Tonalea-Red Lake Chapter for professional technical services and demolition project.

Cameron Chapter will receive \$180,120 from the UUFB for their multipurpose facility. \$600,000 will go toward the purchase of a new bus for the Navajo Transit System. Finally, \$1,559,250 from the UUFB will provide elected officials operating expenses, planning and regular chapter meetings.

The cost breakdown will provide district grazing officials \$877,500. Farm boards will receive \$483,750 and the Eastern Land Board will receive \$198,000.

RETURN OF SACRED MASKS FROM PARIS

On Dec. 11, 2014, Vice President Rex Lee Jim left for Paris, France for the return of Navajo Yei Bi Chei masks that were put up for auction. A private collector put them up for auction through a Paris auction house.

Members of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission and a staff member of the Navajo Nation Washington Office joined the vice president for the return of these sacred masks. My staff from the Navajo Historic Preservation Department worked closely with the council's Sacred Sites Task Force for the return of the masks.

Thankfully, the Navajo delegation was able to purchase the masks outright before they were auctioned. This action sent a message to the world that these sacred cultural resources are not for sale and that they violate the basic human rights of native peoples across the globe. HPD recently held a special blessing ceremony for the masks to bring things back into harmony.

We are grateful for the efforts of the U.S. State Department, U.S. Embassy-Paris, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for their assistance in returning these traditional masks back to the Navajo Nation.



GALLUP DETOXIFICATION CENTER

On Dec. 8, 2014, we met with Senator George Munoz and city leaders in Gallup to discuss the epidemic of alcoholism on the streets of the city. Specifically, we talked about the Gallup Detox Center, formerly known as Na'nizhoozhi Center, Inc. In June 2013, funding for NCI dried up and the responsibility to operate the facility fell squarely on the shoulders of the Navajo Nation.

We accepted the responsibility of helping the people suffering from alcoholism and began working with the center through the Navajo Department of Behavioral Services. After more than 20 years of service, NCI closed its doors and we opened the facility, the name changed to Gallup Detoxification Center. To date, we have spent more than \$1.6 million providing services.

The city of Gallup contributed \$320,000 to DBHS, bumping up the annual operating budget up to \$1.6 million. Despite this joint effort, it is not nearly enough to operate the facility and provide needed services, including counseling and rehabilitation. Estimates from DBHS indicate that to provide that level of service, we are looking at more than \$2 million annually.

In the late 1980s, I joined the senator's father, Eddie Munoz, the former mayor of Gallup for his march on Santa Fe. We marched from Gallup to Santa Fe to bring awareness to the alcoholism issue and in the end, \$400,000 in seed money was provided by the legislature to conduct a feasibility study for the detox center. Eventually, a \$3 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation got the facility off the ground.

Today, the Gallup Detox Center averages about 2,400 people per month. We need help to address the revolving door effect for the center. This means medical detox services and increasing the 12-hour hold for clients to 72-hours for protective custody. Other issues include needed repairs for the HVAC system and an increased budget for protective custody, intervention, treatment, medical detox and aftercare treatment.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

During the 113th Congress, Congressman Don Young, Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, introduced a house bill on Indian energy. The bill proposed to streamline the federal bureaucratic process in energy development on large land base tribes. It passed the House, and was in the Senate for deliberation. The time ran out for the 113th Congress. Our Navajo Nation Washington Office reports that the bill will be reintroduced in the 114th Congress, now under new leadership.

During the 113th Congress, some 142 standalone bills were introduced. Several of them were important to the Navajo Nation, yet the bill we were monitoring was the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act. This bill was introduced in both the House and the Senate. It proposed to



authorize an eight-year trust asset demonstration project to enable tribes to develop plans. It is our understanding that this bill will be reintroduced during this Congress. It is our strong recommendation to support this and the many other proposed bills during this new Congress.

NAVAJO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SIGNED INTO LAW

On Nov. 6, 2014, I enacted the Navajo Department of Health Act of 2014 and affirmed the Navajo Nation's sovereignty in the process. This was a major step toward tribal self-determination because it allows us to regulate healthcare on the Navajo Nation. Many of the 638 contract organizations were against this legislation because it provides the Nation the authority to oversee their programs.

As a sovereign nation, there are certain essential governmental functions that we cannot give away to other sovereigns, entities and organizations. This authority to regulate and monitor healthcare programs within the Navajo Nation's jurisdiction is one of them. Our newly formed Navajo Department of Health will ensure the public health service needs are met through assessments, policy development and quality assurance.

This is a long-term vision that we have for the Nation and all of these changes will not happen overnight. Instead, we must build capacity and hire new experts in policymaking and rulemaking. For the Navajo people, this means consultations and public hearings to ensure their voice is included in these new policies. We will work with tribal, state and federal healthcare providers to begin our next goal: creation of the first tribally administered Medicaid agency.

A recent study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services concluded that it is feasible for the Navajo Nation to begin operating its own Medicaid agency. The potential for the future of our healthcare is tremendous, thanks to the enactment of the Navajo Department of Health. A generation from now, our kids will realize the great investment that was made for the future of the Nation.

NAVAJO-HOPI INDIAN RELOCATION OFFICE

Over the weekend, we had a historic visit from members of the U.S. Congress, and we are grateful that the House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and related agencies came to the Navajo Nation.

The purpose of their trip was to follow up with the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe as to the Office of the Inspector General report that was requested by the subcommittee on the status of the federal relocation program administered by the Office of Navajo Hopi Indian Relocation Program.

Jodi Gillete, Senior Policy Advisor at the White House joined the Congressional delegation.



They toured the Nahata Dzil community and families in Jeddito. The Inspector General has asked for our comments to the recommendation of ONHIR's fate.

The federal government imposed a failed relocation program that has many of our families still without running water, electricity, and unfinished relocation homes. Meanwhile, many of our families are still waiting relocation. Therefore, the message was that the Navajo Nation urges the subcommittee to continue funding ONHIR and finish providing adequate benefits and relocation to all those families who were forced off their ancestral land more than 41 years ago.

The accommodation agreement was entered into between the Hopi Tribe and Navajo Nation. A federal mediator approved it and the subcommittee also addressed the courts. There are pitfalls relating to the agreement that impact Navajo families who signed it. The agreement ends in the year 2071. There are no accommodations provided for them, their life is substandard, there is no infrastructure, no housing and their main livelihood, their livestock, is impounded without proper notice and due process of law.

Other issues shared with the subcommittee were the ongoing impacts of the Bennett Freeze area. The families impacted live without running water, power lines, or roads. Their homes are substandard. Some are never able to construct a home and instead, are forced to live in camper shells or shacks.

We are hopeful the subcommittee listened to our concerns and will give us favorable feedback.

LOOKING AHEAD

As leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure continuity of government and services to the Navajo people, regardless of the political climate that exists. Vice President Jim and I stand prepared to continue providing consistency for these government functions until a new president has been elected and installed into office. We are here for the Navajo people, not for personal self-interests.

With all of the challenges and confusion on when the election will take place and who will be on the ballot, we will continue providing a balance that will keep the Navajo Nation on a direct course for the future. What the Navajo people need is consistency and we are here to provide that support until a successor has been identified.

We appreciate the term of office that we completed by working with our partners on the Navajo Nation Council.

We made our relationship with the tribal legislators of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council strong and one that resulted in progress for the Navajo people. Just as we pledged to do, we



will get through these new challenges facing our Nation and achieve these results through commitment as we uphold the oath of office.

Thank you, 23rd Navajo Nation Council for the opportunity to report on the Executive Branch. Ahe'hee.



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