



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly thanks N.M. Legislature for passing gaming compact



Above, Navajo leaders joined President Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly in the rostrum for the House session. Bottom, Rep. Sharon Clahchischilliage introduced SJR 19 to the House floor and made a strong argument for its passage. She was flanked by expert witnesses Karis Begaye, left, an attorney with Navajo DOJ and Jessica Hernandez, right, from Gov. Martinez's office. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

SANTA FE—It came down to the wire.

With the 2015 N.M. Legislative Session expiring on March 21, Senate Joint Resolution 19 passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 61-5 earlier this evening.

The gaming compact now advances to Gov. Susana Martinez for approval before

getting sent to the U.S. Department of Interior for final authorization.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly expressed appreciation for state lawmakers for approving the compact and not only saving thousands of jobs, but encouraging tribal economic independence.

“I want to say thank you to

members of both the House and Senate for approval of this compact,” President Shelly said. “Gaming is independence and revenue for the tribes.

“Thanks are in order for the governor’s office as well, they worked hard on this compact alongside us,” he added.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’iistoh Sikaad, Tse’ Daa’ Kaan, Upper Fruitland) and council delegates Amber Crotty (Beclabito, Gadiiahi-To’Koi, Red Valley, Sheep Springs, Toadlena-Two Grey Hills, Tse’alnaozt’i’i’) and Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway-Gap, Coppermine, K’aibi’to, LeChee, Tonalea-Red Lake) joined President Shelly in the rostrum.

Rep. Sharon Clahchischilliage (R-San Juan) introduced SJR 19 to the House floor.

She described the joint resolution as a good bill and said five tribes united over the past three years to craft the compact with Gov. Martinez’s office.

“The tribe’s casinos have created thousands of jobs for New Mexicans and brings in millions of dollars every year in revenue sharing to the state of New Mexico,” Clahchischilliage said.

Time was of the essence, she said, because current compacts expire on June 30 and non-approval of SJR 19 would cause severe economic setbacks for the tribes.

She reviewed the main provisions of the compact: increased revenue sharing,

limits on the number of gaming facilities for tribes, the extended 22-year expiration date, new provisions for compacts and participation in the state self-exclusion program.

Many members of the House rose and stood in support of the bill, including Speaker. Ken Martinez (D-Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley).

He said the negotiations were a long and difficult process, especially after last year’s session that saw the Navajo compact stall in the Senate. The difference with the new compact is that the tribes worked together to create a compact in the interests of all.

“It affects everybody,” Martinez said. “I rise in strong support of this gaming compact.”

Rep. Debbie Rodella also rose in support of the compact on behalf of the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

She said in north central N.M., jobs are hard to come by.

“This compact will keep more than 200 people employed,” Rodella said. “It provides stability for the next 22 years.”

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