



THE NAVAJO NATION

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PRESIDENT BEGAYE ADVOCATES ON BEHALF OF ISSUES FACING TRIBAL NATIONS DURING LISTENING SESSION WITH TRUMP TRANSITION TEAM



Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye addresses the Trump Transition Team and participants during the NCAI Strategy Meeting on Priorities for 2017.

WASHINGTON, D.C.-Today before the National Congress of American Indians' (NCAI) Strategy Meeting on Priorities for 2017, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye called for a cabinet-level Native American advisory council, full authority rights to minerals, and an end to dual taxation on Native American lands.

"As aboriginal people, we have signed treaties with the United States and we would like for the Trump Administration to honor these treaties," said President Begaye. "Within these treaties we have articles for education, farming and economic development among many other things. We would like to see these treaty obligations fulfilled."

NCAI's Strategic Meeting hosted a listening session with the Trump Administration Transition Team. Team members present at the session were Trump's Energy Transition Advisor Doug Domenech, Department of Interior Lead David Bernhardt, and Trump's Native American Liaison Jerry Ward.

In advocating for a cabinet-level advisory council, President Begaye said that all too often decisions are made on behalf of tribes without a comprehensive understanding of how tribes will be affected.

"The Navajo Nation is asking President Trump to bring together a true advisory council of Native American leaders as opposed to Obama's White House Advisory Council which had no Native American representation," President Begaye said. "We would like to see Vice President Pence as the chairman of this council so we can have direct input into all decision-making federal agencies."

Regarding economic development, President Begaye said the Navajo Nation would like to have full authority over the mineral rights on the Nation.

"We want full authority rights to coal, oil, uranium, helium or any gases or minerals that exist on our land," President Begaye said. "The Nation has the capability to develop in these areas."

Dual taxation is an issue that was raised by many tribal leaders during the listening session. Businesses operating on tribal lands are subject to both tribal and state taxation which negatively impacts tribal economies. Many leaders expressed that tribal taxation should preempt the states.

“States come onto the Navajo Nation and tax businesses. We need to stop this,” President Begaye said. “We don’t tax the state for the business of Navajos who shop off the reservation. This hinders our ability to bring in economic development ventures and hurts both natives and the states. One option is to update the Indian Trader Regulations.”

In line with President-elect Trump’s priority to bring businesses back to the U.S., President Begaye said the Navajo Nation is ready to repatriate business back to the Nation.

“Companies have been sent to Korea, Mexico, and China because those countries have the tax base and workforce needed, the Navajo Nation has a comparable workforce and tax base so I ask the Trump Administration to bring those companies back and to the Navajo Nation” he said.

President Begaye said he appreciates President-elect Trump’s transition team meeting with NCAI and listening to the concerns that exist throughout Native American communities.

“The issues presented are common among many tribes,” President Begaye said. “The Navajo Nation will continue to foster self-determination within our government, programs and among our people.”

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