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## **President Ben Shelly Advocates for the Navajo Nation At the 2011 New Mexico State and Tribal Leaders Summit**

**Santa Fe, N.M** — Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly joined, New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez, and New Mexico Secretary of Indian Affairs, Arthur Allison at the 2011 New Mexico State and Tribal Leaders Summit to address education, infrastructure, job creation, health care, and natural resources issues.

President Ben Shelly addressed natural resources, water rights, economic development and infrastructure issues, while Navajo Nation Council Speaker Johnny Naize divulged on issues of health care, and education.

President Shelly asked Governor Martinez to partner with the Navajo Nation on increasing infrastructure development and creating new and sustainable jobs.



Left to right: Arthur Allison, NM Secretary of Indian Affairs, Martha Shelly, First Lady, Ben Shelly, Navajo Nation President, Susana Martinez, Governor (NM), and Chuck Franco, First Gentleman.

“In New Mexico, there is a severe lack of funding to properly plan, design, and construct infrastructure projects,” said Shelly. “This funding shortage contributes to project backlog...I believe we can create a more efficient process by implementing a uniform tribal application portal to accelerate the funding approval process.”

“Ultimately, we need to increase tax-sharing agreements and tax incentives, to create better economic opportunities for all New Mexicans,” stated Shelly. “Further, the State should work in partnership with tribes to evaluate opportunities for New Market Tax Credits to stimulate small business development.”

In her response to job development on tribal lands, Governor Martinez said, “We are taking tribal leaders ideas into consideration. As we gather today, I believe there is so much to be accomplished between the state, tribes, and nations. We need to ensure each Native American community thrives with economic development.”

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In his discussion on natural resources, President Shelly emphasized the need for New Mexico to partner with tribes for energy development.

“Our goals are to develop reliable supplies of energy to meet the energy demand of homes in America,” said President Shelly. “Alongside this, it is important that tribes also balance this development with conservation awareness and preservation. Tribes need energy security and as partners with New Mexico, we can prosper together providing for this energy demand. Our overall mission should be to make New Mexico the energy hub in the country, ready for investment.”

President Shelly and tribal leaders also discussed infrastructure funding.

Joining other tribal leaders, President Shelly told Governor Martinez, “Do not pull funding from the Tribal Infrastructure Fund.” He also requested the governor ensure TIF funding continue to be administered by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, rather than the New Mexico Finance Authority.

“We ask that funding continue to be directly administered by the Indian Affairs Department,” said President Shelly. “We had challenges with the New Mexico Finance Authority in the past. In fact, we almost lost over \$5 million in funding for the Cutter Later Project because NMFA would not meet us halfway on court venue language. Fortunately, we saved this funding through a legislative fix by reallocating the dollars to the New Mexico Department of Energy.”

In his address to tribal leaders on natural resources, President Shelly emphasized the need for New Mexico to continue its efforts to work with tribes on water rights and environmental issues.

“New Mexico has to provide an opportunity for grandmas, grandpas, and community members to provide comments, said President Shelly. “Transparency and accountability is important to the Navajo Nation and New Mexico’s 22 Tribes, Pueblos and Nations. To move forward with the bold change, we have to all start providing solutions and become more independent.”

“We have to start looking at ourselves as a state and understand the sovereignty of your Nation, said Governor Martinez. “We have to be partners, not just talk about it. We need solutions on both sides of the table. President Shelly, in the very short time I have, I heard your solutions and we (the state and other tribal leaders) could all come up with more solutions. I will do as many of those as I can in the short time that I can.”

This annual summit was Gov. Susana’s first, making this congregation very important to the tribes working with the state of N.M. President Shelly was therefore sure to provide facts to the new Governor, on behalf of the Navajo Nation.

Speaker Naize supported the Navajo Nation well. Naize requested for educational and health care support.

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