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President Shelly Receives 2011 Smoke Free Gaming Award



Las Vegas, NV—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly today accepted a 2011 National Smokefree Gaming Award from health and legal experts pushing for smoke free casinos nationwide. He received the award for advocating to ban smoking in public places on the Navajo Nation.

“I am currently working on drafting smoke free legislation and will present it to the Navajo Nation Council,” President Shelly told the attendees. “We have many hurdles to go through and my job is to take care of the health of our people.”

Cynthia Hallett, National Smokefree Gaming Symposium organizer and Executive Director of the American Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation presented President Shelly with the award.

“President Shelly is the first tribal leader to support non-smoking casinos on the Navajo Nation,” said Hallett. “Although the executive order was not enforced, it was his actions we are commending him for and I hope it sends a message to other casino gaming tribes who don’t offer a smoke free workplace.”

She also stated the 17th U. S. Surgeon General, Dr. Richard Carmona has given commendation to President Shelly for his historic leadership in advocating for a smoke free Navajo Nation.

The three-day event included a select group of 56 advocates and experts, who shared the latest science news, regional updates from both tribal and state-regulated smoke free gaming efforts and air quality information.

According to the Gaming Symposium, casinos that allow smoking have up to 50 times more cancer-causing particles in the air than highways and city streets clogged with diesel trucks in rush hour traffic.

After the award presentation, Dr. Patricia Nez Henderson, Vice President of the Black Hills Center for American Indian Health and member of TEAM Navajo said, “We are honored President Shelly received this award. It embraces the true value of our culture. If you don’t have your health you don’t have anything else. We support our casinos on Navajoland, but not at the expense of our people’s health.”