



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Photo: L-R Council Delegate George H. Tolth, Lynnann Yazzie, Deputy Associate Superintendent, Arizona Department of Education, Crystalyne Curley, Navajo Nation Speaker – 25th Navajo Nation Council, Council Delegate Curtis Yanito, Tom Horne, Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction (Center), Council Delegate Vince James, Council Delegate Andy Nez, Council Delegate Germaine Simonson, and Council Delegate Helena Nez Begay.

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee meets with Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne

PHOENIX, Ariz.: On Friday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council's Health, Education, and Human Services Committee met with Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne to advocate for educational priorities for students, teachers, and administrators within the Navajo Nation. Superintendent Horne, who served in the same role from 2003 to 2011, was elected in November to oversee Arizona's public school system and direct the state's Department of Education, including the Office of Indian Education.

Among the issues and concerns brought forth by the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee members included the recruitment and retention of educators, full-day kindergarten funding, permanent funding for the Arizona Department of Education and Office of Indian Education, long-term funding for school counselors, after-school tutoring services, efficient student data tracking, more support for Navajo language and culture programs, broadband expansion to support students and teachers, and housing for school teachers and administrators.

"My colleagues of the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee come from diverse backgrounds and communities with many different issues. Our ultimate goal is to increase and improve education opportunities for Navajo students who reside on and off the Navajo Nation. We appreciate Superintendent Horne and his team's willingness to continue this important dialogue as we move forward. It was a productive discussion, and we extended an invitation to the Superintendent to come to the Navajo Nation and visit our schools to provide a firsthand perspective," said Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Chair Vince R. James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat).

Council Delegate Andy Nez (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill), who was previously a Navajo language and culture teacher, noted that over 27,000 students who identify as Navajo are enrolled in schools located on and off the Navajo Nation. He urged the Arizona Department of Education to track data for Navajo students in public schools to measure progress and invest in areas of need. He also called on the Superintendent to appoint more enrolled members of the Navajo Nation to state commissions and committees to reflect the growing number of Navajo students throughout the state.

Arizona Office of Indian Education Deputy Associate Superintendent Lynnann Yazzie thanked the Council members for supporting permanent funding for the office and added that the state is working to improve its data tracking system to pull information for each state's 22 tribal nations. Speaker Crystalyne Curley was also in attendance to support the committee and address issues related to teacher housing needs to increase the recruitment and retention of well-qualified teachers in Navajo communities. In the Chinle School District alone, Speaker Curley said the housing need exceeds \$100 million for teachers.

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Vice Chair Germaine Simonson (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill), Council Delegate Curtis Yanito (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa), Council Delegate Helena Nez Begay (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai'Bii'To, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake), and Council Delegate George H. Tolth (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) were also in attendance. The committee will continue to meet regularly with the Arizona Department of Education and the Office of Indian Education.

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