



The Navajo Nation
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Navajo President Buu Nygren continues week of advocacy for Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement

WASHINGTON – Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren was joined by a large delegation that's in Washington, D.C., this week to advance the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Act.

He said it's particularly needed now with severe drought conditions and depleting water resources in the Southwest.

The President was here Tuesday to testify before the House Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries.

Accompanying him is Navajo Nation First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley, Council Delegate Carl Slater, Hopi Tribal Vice Chairman Craig Andrews, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribal President Robbin Preston, Jr., and Vice President Johnny Lehi, Jr.



Navajo President Buu Nygren speaks to members of the Arizona and New Mexico Congressional delegations to promote passage of the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Act. With him is New Mexico Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez, Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley, First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch, Arizona Congressman Rueben Gallego and Council Delegate Nathan Notah.

Representatives from non-Indian parties to the water settlement include Salt River Project, independent farmers and ranchers, and the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

President Nygren said the landmark settlement is vital to ensure the sustainability of tribal lifestyles, agriculture and economic development.

So far, the delegation met with key lawmakers and officials. These include Arizona Congressmen Juan Ciscomani, Paul Gosar, Ruben Gallego, David Schweikert, Greg Stanton, Eli Crane, New Mexico Congresswoman Teresa Leger-Fernandez, staff from the Office of Senator Mark Kelly and staff from the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.



President Nygren, Speaker Curley, Council Delegates Slater and Notah with Arizona Congressmen Juan Ciscomani and group who gather for photos.

President Nygren and the delegation stressed the need for swift Congressional action, Ahasteen said.

“They highlighted the importance of advancing the settlement within the current administration and this Congress to align with the year-end appropriations calendar,” he said. “Beyond immediate water access benefits, the settlement promises economic revitalization for tribal communities. With secure water rights, tribes can invest in agriculture, establish businesses and create jobs. This will drive economic development and improve the overall quality of life for their members.”

President Nygren emphasized the historic significance of the settlement. He highlighted the unprecedented unity among various tribes to advance this initiative.

"This settlement represents a united front among the tribes, a collaborative effort that is unprecedented," he said. "We need the committee's support to drive the bill forward and to secure a brighter future for our communities."

He said that water is the lifeblood of tribal communities, essential for daily living, sustaining agricultural practices and creating economic growth. For decades, he said, tribal members faced inadequate access to clean water.

This settlement represents a historic opportunity to rectify these injustices and secure a stable water future for the involved tribes, he said.

The urgency of this settlement is now underscored by the ongoing 25-year-long megadrought across the Southwest.

The region's water resources are depleting at an alarming rate, making it imperative to secure water rights for proper planning and resource management, said Navajo Nation Washington Office Director Justin Ahasteen.

“The settlement aims to provide the certainty needed for these efforts to ensure that tribal communities can thrive despite environmental challenges,” he said.

Despite minor concerns of the tight timeline and the coming election season, securing a hearing in September remains a critical step forward.



President Nygren, First Lady, Speaker Curley and Delegate Slater meet with Arizona Congressman David Schweikert. Behind them is portrait of the Grand Canyon.

President Nygren has urged offices to move the bill forward to an immediate markup session in September and to secure a hearing in the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. This will allow the House to review the settlement first and the Senate to consider subsequent recommendations, paving the way for the settlement's passage.

Tribes involved in the settlement have urged all stakeholders to recognize the profound importance of the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Act and to act swiftly to ensure its passage.