



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 2, 2006

CONTACT: GEORGE HARDEEN
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
OFFICE – 928-871-7000
CELL – 928-380-7688
georgehardeen@opvp.org

NEWS ADVISORY

Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Interior Secretary to sign historic compact to lift Bennett Freeze

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., Hopi Vice Chairman Todd Honyaoma and Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne will sign the historic Navajo-Hopi Intergovernmental Compact in Phoenix on Friday to lift the 40-year-old Bennett Freeze in the western portion of the Navajo Nation.

The signing will take place at the Heard Museum, 2301 North Central Avenue, at 4 p.m. The doors will open at 2 p.m.

Also attending the signing will be several members of the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission, including Commission Chairman Lorenzo Bedonie, Commission Vice Chairman Lee Jack, Sr., and Council Delegates Thomas Walker, Jr., Leslie Dele, Raymond Maxx and Harry Williams, Sr., Coalmine Canyon/Toh Nanees Dizi. Also attending will be and Cedric Kuwaninvaya, chairman of the Hopi Land Team.

Former Navajo President Peterson Zah, who helped launch talks between the two tribes in the 1990s, will also attend.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs will be represented by BIA Director Pat Ragsdale, Director of Trusts Arch Wells, Western Regional Director Allen Anspach and Navajo Regional Office Acting Director Omar Bradley.

Navajo Nation Attorney General Louis Denetsosie said the Compact ends a historic division between the tribes brought on by the federal government. The freeze was imposed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner Robert Bennett in 1966.

“This dispute has been going on ever since the Navajos have come back from *Hweeldi*, Bosque Redondo,” Mr. Denetsosie said. “It’s primarily a conflict over land because of the way the U.S. took the land and parceled it back out to the two tribes. This is a major agreement between the two tribes, because of the way they exercised sovereignty since 1868.”

He said once the tribes put this land issue to rest in Arizona, the Navajo Nation can turn to land issues in New Mexico and to the issue of termination of trust responsibility by the federal government in planning and land consolidation.

###

The signing will take place
at the Heard Museum,
2301 North Central Avenue,
at 4 p.m. Doors open at 2 p.m.