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**NAVAJO NATION FIRST TRIBE TO SUPPORT HELMETS TO  
HARDHATS PROGRAM**

*Program to help put returning veterans to work in construction and building  
trades*

August 23rd was a great day for veterans and Armed Forces as leaders from the State of New Mexico and the Navajo Nation celebrated the implementation of the Helmets to Hardhats program to put veterans to work in construction and building trades.

The Helmets to Hardhats program has already been successful in 24 states. It was an initiative that began with the purpose of helping veterans build a career once they get out of the military.

Participants are able to use relevant experience for direct entry, or if they lack experience they are able to train for jobs while getting paid at the same time. The Helmets to Hardhats program works with local trade unions to help active military

and veterans find jobs.

“We will replicate that success here in New Mexico as well,” New Mexico State Secretary of Labor Conroy Chino said.

Major General Matthew Caulfield, executive director of the Helmets to Hardhats program, said that the construction and building trades require employees who are trainable and who are drug-free.

“Where else to go but the Armed Forces?” Caulfield said, adding that offering careers is a way to thank veterans for their service.

Lt. Governor Diane Denish said that the program offers “more than a handshake,” by giving veterans the opportunity to begin a second career. She noted that returning veterans are three times more likely to be unemployed than their civilian counterparts.

Caulfield said a big reason for the high unemployment rate is the lack of networking that men and women are able to do while serving their country.

The Navajo Nation was recognized by Caulfield as the first Native American tribe to adopt the Helmets to Hardhat program. On August 14, 2006, the Human Services Committee of the Navajo Nation Council passed the resolution supporting the program and encouraging interested Navajo servicemen and – women to register. During the ceremony on Wednesday, Angela Barney-Nez, staff assistant to Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan, presented the resolution to Helmets to Hardhat officials.

Speaker Morgan had sponsored the resolution to the Human Services Committee, which passed it 6 in favor and none opposed.

“The Navajo Nation will participate. Native Americans will come home to this program with hope and goodwill, to enjoy their freedom in their homeland, build a career and raise their families,” Speaker Morgan said about the program.

At the ceremony, which held at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Unit no. 611 in Albuquerque, N.M., Vice President Frank Dayish introduced Randall Morgan from Smith Lake, N.M., who is one of the participants

in the program.

“I challenge all of Indian Country to fall in line with implementing the Helmets to Hardhat program,” Dayish said. He added that he will continue to work with the Council’s Human Services Committee to improve delivery of services to Navajo veterans.

Both the Speaker, through Barney-Nez, and the Vice President thanked Benson Bitsui, assistant business manager with the IBEW Local Union No. 611, for bringing the program to the attention of Navajo Nation leaders.