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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **VETERANS DAY ACTIVITIES IN EASTERN NAVAJO AGENCY**

The Navajo Nation celebrated Veterans Day with numerous celebrations held throughout many local communities. Last year the Navajo Nation Council declared 2004 The Year of the Veteran and earlier this year, by legislation, extended it into 2005.

On November 11, 2005, the Navajo Nation Veterans Day began at the Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock, Arizona, with a morning ceremony and proceeded to the Sports Center. The same day, the Eastern Navajo Agency held a ceremony to honor the veterans and honor guards within its agency at the shopping center in Crownpoint, N.M.

Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan began the day on November 11 riding in the Iyanbito Veterans Day parade in Iyanbito, N.M., along with his niece Miss Wingate Elementary Princess Amber Dawn Morgan and with other family members following on motorcycle. The speaker, who has two children who have served in the Armed Forces, and his family rode to honor their own family members in the military. The grand marshal for the parade was Patrick T. Begay, U.S. Navy, who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Also present at the Iyanbito celebration were Miss Indian Ceremonial Shannon Hood and the newly crowned Miss Iyanbito Veterans Organization who gave a special performance in honor of veterans.

Following the Iyanbito gathering, the Speaker joined Council delegates Alice W. Benally and Harriet K. Becenti along with more than 200 others in Crownpoint where veterans received medals of valor in appreciation of their services. The honored guests for the Veterans Day activities were Harry and Isabel Shondee, the parents of fallen Navajo warrior Harry Shondee, Jr.

The speaker delivered a message of appreciation for the veterans who ensure that the ideals of democracy and freedom are upheld in the world and in the United States. He thanked everyone for sending their thoughts and prayers to those who are currently serving overseas.

Speaker Morgan further commended the communities for uniting to honor their veterans and Armed Forces.

What I noticed this year is that more local Chapters and veterans are organizing to honor those who have served in their community, Speaker Morgan noted after the activities. This is a most significant development that has occurred during the Year of the Veteran.

The message that veterans should begin to organize locally resonated during the Eastern Navajo Veterans Organization meeting held in Thoreau, N.M., on Sunday, November 13, with a message from its commander Austin Desiderio, Sr.

Desiderio told the organization that the veterans should begin to organize and get recognized by the Navajo Nation and chartered by the United States. To do so would allow veterans to seek funds as non-profit organizations and seek services that are needed on the Navajo Nation.

Desiderio recognized the Tohatchi Veterans Organization as the premier veterans group on the Navajo Nation saying that each community on the Navajo Nation should strive to emulate that organization.

Also at the meeting, Council delegate Ben Shelly made a presentation on a proposed veterans trust fund.

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