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**EDUCATION COMMITTEE PLEASSED WITH SIGNING OF HISTORIC
ARIZONA INDIAN EDUCATION ACT**

PHOENIX, Ariz. – Governor Janet Napolitano signed the Arizona Indian Education Act into law yesterday, Sept. 14, 2006. The Navajo Nation Council’s Education Committee and other tribal leaders were on hand, applauding a coordinated effort among tribal and education interests during the 47th Legislature to establish a measure that would provide guidelines for Indian Education in Arizona.

“One of the goals of the Act is to improve achievement scores for reservation schools. There is a noticeable achievement gap when you compare scores of on-reservation and off-reservation schools,” said Education Committee Chairperson Leonard Chee (Birdsprings/Leupp/Tolani Lake). “I want to thank the Intertribal Council of Arizona and the Arizona tribal leaders for lending their support for the bill, which proved crucial in the waning hours of the legislature.”

At a reception hosted by the Education Committee, Committee member and Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Dennehotso) acknowledged the tremendous effort made by Senator Albert Hale (D-District 2), Representative Pete Rios (D-District 23) and others to revive the bill once an initial vote to adopt the bill failed. Benally explained she approached Senator Hale personally and he immediately made phone calls.

“We did not intend for this to be a partisan bill, but it turned out that way,” ssid Benally. Benally explained there was still much work to be done with the implementation of the bill at the agency level, as well as to seek amendments to strengthen the Act.

Representatives Amanda Aguirre (D-District 24) and Meg Burton Cahill (D-District 17) attended the reception to offer their congratulations. Representative Cahill explained that it took a lot of effort to pass the bill, but in working together, the effort was successful. She encouraged similar tribal coordination in the upcoming legislative session.

The Committee delivered certificates of appreciation to the Governor, key legislators and agency staff who were instrumental in the consideration and passage of the bill. The Committee acknowledged Governor Napolitano, Speaker James P. Weiers (R-District 10), Senator Linda Aguirre (D-District 16), Senator Toni Hellon (R-26), Representative Rios, Representative Mark Anderson (R-District 18), Representative Collette Rosati (R-District 8), Representative Albert Tom (D-District 2), and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne.

Governor Napolitano signed the Arizona Indian Education Act today at a Governor’s Tribal Summit on Growth held at the Governor’s Office Executive Tower in Phoenix, Arizona. Education Committee members who were present at the Summit and the reception include Chee, Benally, David L. Tom (Beclabito/Gadiiahi), Andy R. Ayze (Chinle) and Lee Jack, Sr. (Whitecone/Indian Wells). Council Delegate Elbert R. Wheeler (Many Farms/Round Rock) also attended the Summit.

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