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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Speaker Morgan recognizes the great loss to the Navajo Nation with the passing of Navajo leader, Taylor McKenzie

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) recognizes the great loss to the Navajo Nation with the passing of former Navajo Nation Vice-President Taylor McKenzie.

Dr. McKenzie, 76, passed on during the late morning of Friday, April 13, 2007 at Presbyterian Hospital.

“Dr. McKenzie contributed a monumental amount in the areas of government and medicine,” Morgan said. “It is a profound loss to the Navajo Nation.”

A pioneering Navajo surgeon, Dr. McKenzie was one of the first Navajo physicians who effectively served as Navajo Nation vice-president from 1999 to 2003 during Navajo Nation President Kelsey A. Begaye’s administration.

During 2005, Dr. McKenzie was appointed as the Navajo Nation’s first Medical officer. For more than 30 years, he was a physician with the Public Health Service on the Navajo Nation.

Health and Social Services Committee Chairperson Thomas Walker, Jr. (Birdsprings/Tolani Lake/Leupp) noted that Dr. McKenzie contributed a tremendous amount to the betterment of the Navajo Nation.

“What more of a contribution can anyone give?” Walker said, noting that Dr. McKenzie was a pioneer in many career and leadership aspects. “Dr. McKenzie helped to establish the Navajo Task Force on Veterans’ Health Care.”

Walker said the establishment of the Task Force on Veterans’ Health Care is needed overwhelmingly, and the task force focused on community based out-patient care clinics.

Speaker Morgan concurred that a pioneering great leader will be missed, and he will be remembered for the love of the Navajo people, and being a leader in the fields of medicine and leadership.

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Dr. McKenzie was a 1954 graduate of Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill. He earned his medical degree from Baylor University College of Medicine in Houston during 1958. He interned at Pontiac General Hospital in Pontiac, Mich., during 1958 to 1959, and completed his surgery residency at Pontiac General Hospital from 1958 to 1963.

He became a member of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps during 1964 and served in that position on the Navajo Nation until he retired during January 1995. He continued his medical practice part-time in the outpatient department at the Gallup Indian Medical Center until he ran for tribal vice president during 1998. After serving in the office of vice-president, he served as CEO for the Sage Memorial Hospital in Gando.

Dr. McKenzie received numerous awards such as the New Mexico Distinguished Public-Service Award and the Distinguished Service Medal from the U.S. Public Health Service. During 2005, Wheaton College Alumni Association recognized him with the Distinguished Service to Society Award.

He is survived by his wife, Betty McKenzie, and their nine children.

Navajo Nation flags are scheduled to be flown half-staff on Monday, April 16, 2007 in his honor. Funeral arrangements are pending.