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## Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan Questions New Direction of Bureau of Indian Affairs

POLSON, Mont. — Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) attended a Bureau of Indian Affairs (Bureau) Tribal Budget Advisory Meeting in Polson, Mont. Thursday, Aug. 9 to discuss and consider future funding for the Navajo area.

Morgan was joined by other tribal leaders from around Indian County to contemplate federal funding levels and related issues affecting the more than 500 federally recognized tribes. Specifically, some of the issues raised at this meeting were financial support for public safety, education, economic development/community development, natural resources. These services will be revisited by tribal leaders at regional service areas to refine federal funding levels.

Another key development at Polson centered on the issue of “modernization” of the Bureau’s operations. Assistant Secretary of Interior Carl Artman announced his desire to plan for the future under the concept of “modernization.”

According to Artman, modernization means letting tribes identify their programs of need through regional input. Once these positions have been made, the Bureau can respond to this list. This change is meant to encourage Bureau involvement for Native American tribes.

Commenting on this position Speaker Morgan said, “modernization appears not just at the central level (BIA headquarters), we have to modernize everything, such as how this perspective impacts the land and its people.” Speaker Morgan concisely pointed out that any approach enacted by the Bureau affects all facets of a community.

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Questioning Artman, Morgan asserted, “modernization as you stated is broad sweeping. What you need to consider are the changes occurring within the Nations’ such as population.”

“Currently, we (Navajo) are operating on limited resources while our population out paces the resources you provide us,” Morgan said.

Morgan’s comments were well received by the attendees as they developed a series of questions premised on Morgan’s remarks.

Other issues covered at this session were a review of the Fiscal Year 2008 Federal Budget and the congressional timeline. Currently, this budgetary process is ongoing and will be refining as the budget cycle continues. Discussion also focused on the group’s approval of Fiscal Year 2006 Sweep recommendation, which totals \$4 million and includes \$1 million reserved for former Navajo Nation Bennett Freeze studies and preliminary activities prior to construction. Additionally, the Advisory group approved by consensus Fiscal Year 2010 Priorities: Public Safety, Education, Economic Development, and Natural Resources.

Joining Speaker Morgan on this trip was his Chief of Staff Dr. James Davis, Jr., and Bureau officials from the Navajo Area. The meeting is scheduled to conclude on Aug. 10<sup>th</sup>.