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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Funding for \$300,000 for a New Dilkon Court approved by Human Services Committee

PHOENIX – The Human Services Committee members of the Arizona State Legislature unanimously approved \$300,000 last Thursday, Feb. 16 for a new court facility in Dilkon after hearing testimony by Herb Yazzie, Navajo Nation Chief Justice, Judiciary Committee members of the Navajo Nation Council and Dilkon Court staff.

Rep. Albert Tom (D-District 2) sponsored the bill and Navajo Nation lobbyist Katosha Nakai of Lewis and Roca LLP has been lobbying the measure.

Before the hearing, Kee Allen Begay Jr., Judiciary Committee chairman, Darlene LaFrance, the Dilkon court administrator, and Nakai met days earlier with Human Services Committee members. Begay, LaFrance and Nakai each explained the need for a new court building by Dilkon-area community members.

“I just want to thank everybody for participating,” said Begay who represents the Many Farms and Round Rock Chapters as a council delegate. “We still need everyone’s cooperation out there and their support to keep moving the effort forward. Ultimately, we want to implement and provide direct services to both our Navajo people and our neighbors so that we truly can have justice for all.”

Other members of Navajo leadership such as Judge Louise Grant; Jessie Thompson, Navajo County Supervisor and a Justice of the Peace; Edward Jim, Judiciary Committee member (Greyhills/Sheepsprings/Newcomb), and council delegates Nelson Gorman Jr. (Chinle), Ray Berchman (Oak Springs/St. Michaels); Harold Wauneka (Fort Defiance) and Jerry Freddie (Dilkon/Teesto).

“Successful legislative efforts require lots of advance preparation and coordination,” said Nakai, the Navajo Nation’s lobbyist who is retained by the Office of the Speaker. “I can work the legislature and the Governor’s Office, but it’s the collaboration that is propelling this project. The Speaker’s Office, the Office of the President and Vice President and Chief Justice has supported the court staff in Dilkon who is giving this project energy and momentum.”

Nakai added that, “It’s that cooperative spirit combined with the dedication of Representative Tom and Senator Hale that will ultimately carry the day.”

“If it wasn’t for Representative Tom’s modest proposal, we might never have gotten an initial hearing and convinced the legislature to look seriously at the need; and if it wasn’t for Senator Hale’s boldness in asking for the full amount, we wouldn’t have shot at the big money,” Nakai said, noting that both these legislators, the Navajo Nation

leadership and local community members have worked together for the people and the people can be proud.”

Following the hearing, Judge Grant said, “People from the state don’t see the need because they’re not out there, but we still have to provide services to our people.”

“No matter what we look like we’ll be here to provide the service and I’m happy about our progress,” Grant said. “I was glad to be here today to show our need. Legislators saw it and we want the Appropriations Committee and Rules Committees in both Houses and lawmakers from both parties to see that we all need a court and a way to give people and opportunity to be heard and protected.”