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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Navajo Nation Applauds New Mexico Sen. Domenici for Addressing Prison Construction Crisis

Senator Successfully Includes \$15 Million for New Jails in Appropriations Bill

Washington, D.C. - Hope MacDonald Lone Tree, Chair of the Public Safety Committee of the Navajo Nation, congratulated Sen. Pete Domenici (R-New Mexico) on Wednesday, June 27 for his successful effort to provide vital funding for new jail construction in Indian Country.

"We are so grateful for Senator Domenici's leadership," said MacDonald Lone Tree who represents the To Nanees Dizi and Coal Mine Chapters. "He understands how the dreadful lack of jails impacts our community and is working to deliver funding that will help protect Navajo people from violent offenders. Our Public Safety Committee worked many hours and traveled thousands of miles advocating for this funding."

Sen. Domenici announced that the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Subcommittee included \$15 million to construct new detention facilities on tribal lands.

"Senator Domenici's effort to help Indian Country build new jails is a much needed and much welcomed step in the right direction for the public safety situation in the Navajo communities," MacDonald Lone Tree said. "We will continue to work with Senator Domenici to ensure that the final Conference Report includes vital funding for detention facility construction."

The Navajo Nation is experiencing a crisis in law enforcement due to the lack of detention facilities. The Navajo Nation has a population of more than 300,000 spread over an area larger than the state of West Virginia.

Unfortunately, the Navajo Nation detention facilities have deteriorated so severely that prisoners can only be kept overnight in three six adult detention facilities. Since the Navajo Nation has only 59 jail beds for the entire Navajo Nation, many inmates serve only a portion of their sentences due to the lack of available detention facilities.

"Early this year, the lack of jails reached a critical mass with the additional closure of the Chinle Detention Center," MacDonald Lone Tree said.

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Delores Greyeyes, the Navajo Nation Corrections Director said, "I am very excited to learn the news from Senator Domenici's office. We have spent years working to secure funding to build new jail facilities on Navajo as well throughout all of Indian Country. The fruit is starting to ripen. Thank you Senator Domenici for your support."

"I am grateful for the commitment of funding Sen. Domenici allocated for the Indian Country jail facilities," said Edmund Yazzie (Thoreau), Public Safety Committee Vice-Chair. "I am thankful the Congressional leaders took the opportunity to listen to our issues at the national level. It shows our efforts in Washington, D.C., were successful."

Rex Lee Jim (Rock Point), a Public Safety Committee member, said, "It took hard work, much team work and a clear vision to accomplish this part of the Navajo jail situation. Thank you Senator Domenici!"

MacDonald Lone Tree explained that, "Local law enforcement and corrections staff on the Navajo Nation really made their voice heard about the need for new detention facilities on Navajo."

"Through regular visits with Members of Congress, The White House, the U.S. Department of Justice and Congressional Appropriations Staff, the Public Safety Committee has consistently demonstrated a compelling case about our need for new facilities," MacDonald Lone Tree said. "I want to thank all the law enforcement and corrections officers, as well as the other Public Safety Committee members for their tireless effort to make our case in Washington, D.C. While our job is not yet finished, Sen. Domenici's commitment demonstrates what we can achieve while working together."

She added that, "Our message was simple and effective: the lack of detention facilities on the Navajo Nation is creating a public safety emergency for Navajo people and communities. And now, we have \$15 million for new jails construction in the Senate Appropriations bill. We will continue to fight to ensure that the final version of legislation includes funding for the Navajo Nation. Criminals, beware! During days of the revolving Navajo jail-cell door are coming to an end. You will serve time."

The Public Safety Committee is greatly appreciative of the efforts put forth by Sen. Domenici, Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ), and Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) for going to bat for our People and the thousands of victims who have yet to see justice.

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