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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **Navajo Nation Judiciary Committee Chair Advocates for Funding with Senate and House**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Judiciary Committee Chairperson Kee Allen Begay Jr. (Many Farms/Round Rock) met Monday, March 19 with several Senators and Representatives to advocate for funding for the Navajo Judicial Branch.

With the assistance of Navajo Nation Washington Office Legislative Associate Javier Ramos, Begay visited the staff and offices of Sen. Jon Kyle (R-AZ), Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), Rep. Rick Renzi (R-AZ-1). Begay also met with representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice, Tribal Justice Program.

“We received positive responses from the senators and representatives’ offices,” Begay said, adding that it’s a matter of the Navajo Nation to keep up with the pace of doing follow up and keeping in contact with the officials’ staffers and be readily available to provide information. “This is another advocacy effort for funding request for Navajo Nation Judicial Branch. The Judiciary Committee is working on several projects throughout the Navajo Nation to improve court facilities and services. The Judiciary Committee is actively approaching all available avenues for funding.”

Chairperson Begay said, “The Judiciary Committee received authorization by the Intergovernmental Relations Committee for legislation that supports the submission of a bill in the Senate and House that seeks to fund the construction of a Navajo Nation Supreme Court complex.”

Chairperson Begay is working to have the bill be introduced during the 110th Congress. Begay said that it is still in the preliminary stage, and much more work needs to be completed such as the review by the U.S. Congress Legislative Counsel.

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## **Page 2-2-2/Begay/Judiciary Committee Advocates in D.C.**

Begay explained that, "this is somewhat a 'special' project of the Judiciary Committee where our main effort is to improve the District Courts through an increase of sales tax which will take effect July 2007. Funds from the tax will be available next year."

He added that the committee has also approached all three state governments, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah that comprise of the Navajo Nation to fund some district courts. Progress is being made at the state level, too.

Begay said that he would also like scheduled visits with Rep. Jim Matheson (D-UT-2) and Rep. Tom Udall (D-NM-3). The purpose of these visits is informing the officials of the Navajo Nation request and providing supporting documents and information on the importance of building Navajo Nation Supreme Court Facility."

He said that "with their coordination, hopefully, all will be sponsors of this bill in both the Senate and House," and the total amount being requested is \$11 million for the actual construction of the Supreme Court facility.

The Navajo Nation is contributing \$1.5 million for pre-construction activity, and the located has been identified within the Window Rock-area, and is 5.9 acres, according to Begay.

"I feel very confident that this bill will be introduced later this year and I along with my Judiciary Committee will make all efforts to advocate these officials and make sure information is provided," Begay said. "Once the bill is introduced and assigned to Senate and House committees I will to testify before these committees and express the importance of the Supreme Court Facility and invite them to visit our current building."

Lastly, he added that he's requested Rep. Renzi to visit the Kayenta District Court while he is visiting Dennehotso Chapter on April 12, 2007.

"This is a good opportunity for the Judicial Branch to advocate for the support of congressman for the Supreme Court Bill and other Judicial Branch funding issue," Begay said.

Chairperson Begay also provided information on the Supreme Court oral argument set for April 5, 2007, in Washington. He invited the congressional offices to attend.