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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Governor Richardson appoints Council Delegate, Edmund Yazzie, to the Governor's State-Tribal DWI Task Force**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. -- New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson appointed Navajo Nation Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie, Vice-chair of the Public Safety Committee, to the Governor's State-Tribal DWI Task Force during late April.

Yazzie (Thoreau) is a first-term council delegate who replaced Ben Shelly, the current Navajo Nation Vice-President.

"I'm honored that I've been appointed," Yazzie said. "Now we have a strong voice to combat our DWI problem on the reservation."

Last December, Gov. Richardson announced several initiatives to reduce DWI on tribal lands in the state of New Mexico.

Initiatives included establishing a Tribal DWI Task Force that includes a study issues related to data sharing, enforcement, public awareness, incarceration, treatment and develop appropriate solutions, according to the Traffic Safety Bureau, New Mexico Department of Transportation.

"I am committed to doing whatever we can to fight the problem of drunken driving in New Mexico," said Gov. Richardson. "These actions will help provide tribes and pueblos with the tools to fight DWI in their own communities."

Yazzie has a 14-year law enforcement career that began when he was 19-years-old as a law enforcement officer for the Ramah Navajo Police Department.

Yazzie's career includes 13 years with the McKinley County Sheriff's Department, and worked as an Investigator for District Attorney Karl Gillison.

A person is Driving While Intoxicated in the state of New Mexico when he/she has a blood alcohol content of .08 percent or higher.

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## **Page 2-2-2/Begay/New Mexico Gov. Appoints Delegate**

Yazzie will be attending his first meeting scheduled for May 10, and he said he already has projects to work on “to combat the DWI problem.”

Yazzie said he and his colleagues are “going to make DWI awareness in the Navajo community as priority to fight DWI.”

“In my case, I see how we can strengthen our Navajo Nation laws,” Yazzie said.

A first offense for DWI is punishable with a mandatory 24 hours spent in jail, and pay a fine, said Navajo Police Department Lt. Francine Bradley.

An intermission lock is put on the vehicle of the offender which measures the Blood Alcohol Content.

If the offender is tested with a BAC of .08 percent, that person is legally intoxication, the offender will be incarceration and his/her car is towed. The offender has to attend a DWI class, according to Yazzie.

The second and third offenses each carry more jail time, Yazzie added.

Nationally, Native Americans experience higher rates of alcohol related fatalities and are two to three times more likely to die or be seriously injured in a traffic crash more than ethnic groups. During 2005, almost 25 percent of New Mexico’s alcohol related fatalities occurred on tribal land.

The state of New Mexico initiatives were announced prior of the second Indian State National Alcohol Impaired Driving Law Enforcement Mobilization that was scheduled Dec. 22, 2006 -Jan. 2, 2007, and coincided with New Mexico holiday DWI Super Blitz, scheduled from Dec. 22, 2006 – Jan. 7, 2007.