



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

Contact: Alastair L. Bitsoi, Public Information Officer

Phone: (928) 871-7228

Cell: (928) 255-2943

Fax: (928) 871-7255

navajocouncil_pio@yahoo.com

www.navajonationcouncil.org

April 16, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaker Morgan, Council Delegates meet with New Mexico Gov. Richardson, cabinet members

ISELTA PUEBLO, N.M. – Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan led a Navajo delegation to the New Mexico State-Tribal Summit on April 14. The summit was held at the Isleta Resort and Casino near Albuquerque, N.M.

Council Delegates Leonard Anthony (Shiprock) and Norman John II (Twin Lakes) attended the summit along with Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly. The state's 22 tribes met with Gov. Richardson to discuss several issues affecting tribes across the state.

Gov. Richardson explained the purpose of the summit was to leave benchmarks for the future of Native Americans in the state.

"Today's Summit reflects the high priority my Administration has placed upon strengthening state-tribal relations," Gov. Richardson said. "Coming together with the leadership of the 22 nations, tribes and pueblos of the state, in a forum that promotes open communication and cooperation, embodies true government-to-government relationships. I am confident that we have set a strong precedent that will carry the dialogue into future administrations."

The summit, mandatory under the Tribal Collaboration Act, which the governor signed into law last year included discussion on Indian education, tribal infrastructure, anti-DWI initiatives between the state and tribes, and tribal economic development.

In regards to infrastructure, the tribes agreed and recommended the state draft a uniform application for capital outlay projects, which could help streamline the delay of monies for projects. Discussion on economic development resulted in an agreement to create an economic tribal advisory council under the state's economic development department.

Speaker Morgan spoke about the importance of tribal infrastructure in Indian Country, particularly in New Mexico. He thanked the governor for his work to create a permanent tribal infrastructure fund among other effective initiatives to empower state-tribal relations.

"Senate Bill 196 is at work here – the Collaboration Act, which has opened the door and paved a way for native nations to develop ideas and work on various things with the state," Speaker Morgan said. "I commend the governor and state legislators for Senate Bill 196, House Bill 162, the Tribal

- more -

Infrastructure Fund, and other bills very important to us. We need to capitalize and use this working tool to work with our state."

In regards to DWI, Vice President Shelly said the recent Navajo Nation Council amendments to Diné Fundamental Law could help public safety on the Navajo Nation.

"One thing that is good is that the Navajo Nation lawmakers passed legislation on Diné Fundamental Law," Shelly explained. "Now with the amendments, public safety can enforce alcohol regulation, which will benefit the Navajo Nation in the area of DWI."

In regards to education, Anthony said, "The Navajo Nation appreciates the state efforts on language and culturally appropriate education. The need for more coordinated efforts to ensure education in the classroom is conducive to learning styles of Native Americans."

The Navajo Nation recommended the state craft legislation to increase authority for the Indian Education Advisory Council and legislation to withhold approval of a school district's annual budget until districts demonstrate its compliance with the Indian Education Act.

"For the long term, the Navajo Nation is seeking to establish a state education agency and asked New Mexico for support," said Anthony.

"The issues and solutions discussed today will help achieve goals important to all New Mexicans: improved regional and local economies; greater public safety; sufficient community infrastructure and enhanced educational opportunity for all of New Mexico's children," said Alvin Warren, Secretary of Indian Affairs in New Mexico. "My department looks forward to building stronger collaboration between state agencies and tribal governments as we work to implement the solutions agreed upon today."

###