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Law and Order Committee members commend local, tribal, and federal officials for the opening of the new Ramah Navajo Detention Facility

RAMAH, N.M. – Several members of the Law and Order Committee including Council Delegates Raymond Smith, Jr., Kee Allen Begay, Jr., and Otto Tso, were in Ramah on Saturday to support the community as they celebrated the opening of the new Ramah Navajo Detention Facility – located approximately 42-miles south of Gallup, N.M.

PHOTO: (left to right) President Russell Begaye, Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr., and Council Delegate Otto Tso at the opening ceremony for the new Ramah Navajo Detention Facility in Ramah, N.M. on Dec. 3, 2016.

The LOC members were joined by Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye, President Russell Begaye, Ramah Chapter officials, Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety representatives, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the completion of the facility that has the capacity to house up to a total of 40 inmates, two padded cells, a detox cell, booking area, detaining area, interview room, officer station, visitor check-in, storage area, medical room, and laundry room.

LOC vice chair Delegate Smith thanked the various entities for collaborating over the last several years to complete the project, adding that the new facility will allow the NNDPS to function more efficiently by providing a facility to hold inmates that is closer to the community rather than having to transport inmates to the Crownpoint detention facility, which is nearly two hours away.

“It was an honor to be part of the grand opening for a facility that will be a great help and service to the community and law enforcement officers,” said Delegate Smith. “It took a vision and hard work to get this accomplished.”

The detention facility was funded by several sources including funds secured by the U.S. Department of Justice through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Navajo Nation,

Ramah Navajo Chapter, and other federal grants awarded to the project.

In 2015, LOC members also sponsored and approved legislation that reallocated approximately $354,000 from the Navajo Nation's Judicial/Public Safety Facilities Fund to complete the construction of the Ramah facility to help offset a funding shortfall for the project.

LOC member Delegate Begay, thanked local and federal officials for their support and efforts to make the project a success and also asked the public for their continued support in addressing public safety and judicial issues.

"We, the Law and Order Committee, continue to show our support in the development of the Navajo Nation public safety program," said Delegate Begay. "We have heard the concerns of our Navajo people across the Navajo Nation and we continue to ask for your understanding and support to continue moving us forward to provide increased public safety for our people."

LOC member Delegate Tso, who provided a traditional blessing ceremony for the new facility on Saturday, said he is pleased with the successful outcome of the project and sees it as a way of helping to protect Navajo people living in and around the community of Ramah.

"The facility will provide better service and justice for the people. I'm very happy for the community and the people of Ramah on this day. We still have a lot of work to do for the Navajo Nation in the field of public safety and judicial services and I will continue to work hard to support projects that serve our people," stated Delegate Tso.

Delegate Tso also delivered a special appreciation message to the local Ramah Chapter officials, particularly the chapter's Office of Contracts and Grants, for their perseverance and diligence in pushing the project forward for years.

"Ramah Chapter did a wonderful job with the framework of the project on their own and I commend all the Ramah community leaders who worked together on this new facility," added Delegate Tso.

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