



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Delegates seek to partner with New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah to implement the FirstNet emergency first responder network program

WINDOW ROCK – Several members of the Navajo Nation Council were pleased with the recent announcement from Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey that the state of Arizona has opted-in to the FirstNet emergency first responder network system that will deliver a specialized wireless broadband network to Arizona’s public safety officials and first responders. Arizona is the thirteenth state to opt-in to the federal program.

FirstNet is a federal program that was established in 2012 by Congress, which is designed to deliver a nationwide broadband network dedicated to public safety, to strengthen public safety users’ communications capabilities enabling them to respond more quickly and effectively to accidents, disasters, and emergencies. States have the option of whether or not to opt-in to the program. The state of New Mexico also recently decided to opt-in to the program. The state of Utah has yet to issue a decision on whether or not to opt-in to the program.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), who is a member of the Law and Order Committee, said the Council will continue to seek participation in the planning and implementation of the program to ensure that the Navajo Nation is included in the coverage area.

“It is critical for the states of Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico to acknowledge the government-to-government relationship in building the best first responders plan for Navajo communities,” stated Delegate Begay.

On Aug. 9, Delegate Begay introduced Legislation No. 0302-17, which requests the state of Utah to opt-in to the FirstNet program as well. The legislation is assigned to the Law and Order Committee and the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee for final consideration.

“We are very pleased to learn that Arizona has joined New Mexico in opting in to FirstNet and I also thank the members of the Law and Order Committee for their continued advocacy on behalf of the Navajo Nation to ensure that the program works effectively for our Nation’s first responders,” stated Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland).

On May 24, Speaker Bates and Delegate Begay met with Gov. Ducey and requested that the state opt-in to the FirstNet program and work closely with the Navajo Nation to make the program effective across the 27,000 square-miles of the Navajo Nation to help police and other first responders.

“We want this program to work effectively for our public safety and emergency responders,” added Delegate Begay. “The system that is currently in place creates many issues and leads to delayed responses in emergency situations.”

Delegate Begay said he will seek meetings with the governors of Arizona and New Mexico to address the implementation of the FirstNet system, and to urge the Utah governor to opt-in to the program as well.

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