23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 2, 2017

MEDIA CONTACTS
Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Council members provide opening remarks at Navajo Public Safety Summit

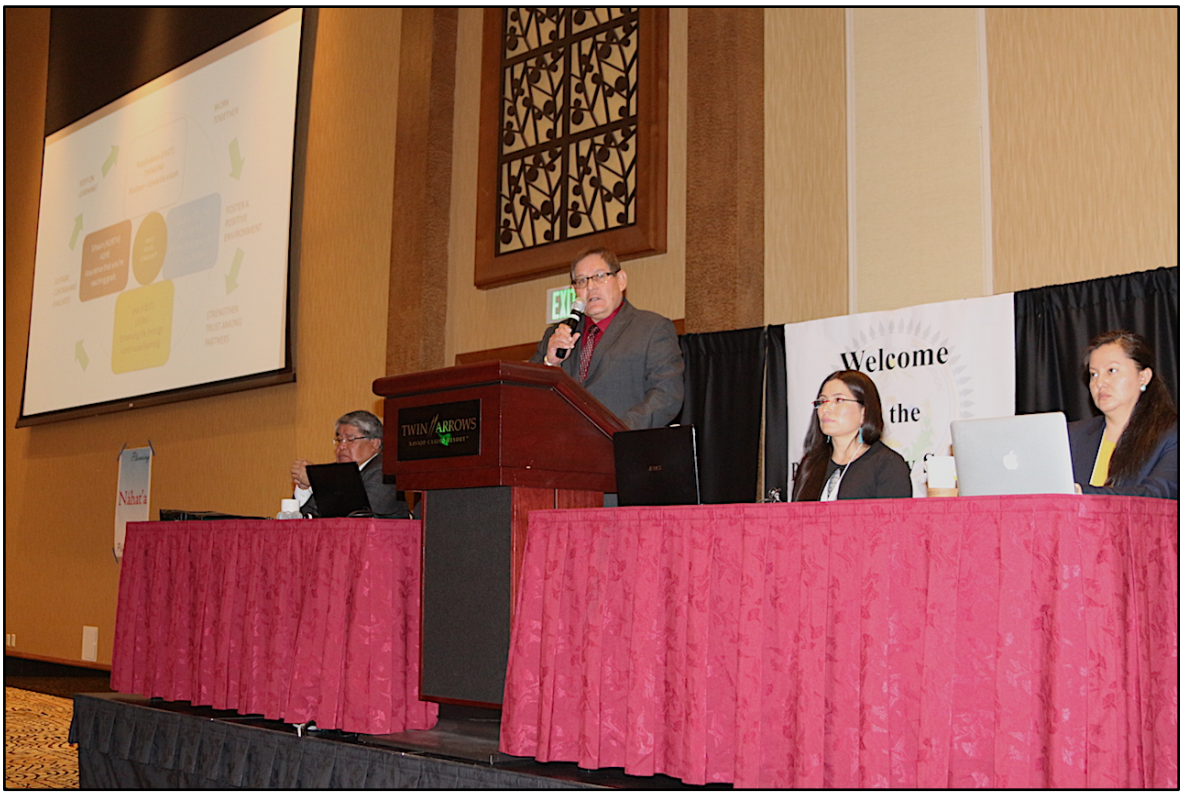

Photo: Speaker LoRenzo Bates providing opening remarks at the Navajo Nation Public Safety Summit at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort on Jan. 30, 2017.

LEUPP, Ariz. – Members from the 23rd Navajo Nation Council were invited to provide opening remarks at the Navajo Nation Public Safety Summit at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort, a five-day session that seeks to produce a three-phased action plan to improve the Nation's public safety system and would serve as the main component in establishing a Tribal Access Plan.

According to the session's agenda items, it states that the proposed long-term comprehensive plan is a strategy for the coming years and would aid in obtaining federal funding and grants once the Navajo Nation has officially established its own TAP.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) stressed the importance of developing the TAP and said that despite the many challenges that Navajo public safety professionals may face, the Nation is encouraged that the summit would prove successful in developing lasting solutions.

"How do we address the revolving door in our criminal justice system? We understand that unemployment and other social issues are contributing factors to the high crime rates on the Navajo Nation," said Speaker Bates. "It is the responsibility of the central Navajo government to handle these critical issues, and this summit is a part of that process of developing solutions."

Speaker Bates stated that it is vital to increase economic development to create jobs and provide vocational pathways for Navajo citizens to deter crime rates, as well as to provide opportunities for offenders to reduce recidivism.

Law and Order Committee vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) expressed his appreciation of public safety and judicial staff for participating in the summit and said their assistance is crucial to aiding Navajo lawmakers.

"I want to make it known that we are in support for law enforcement, judicial, corrections, EMS, fire, and all public safety personnel. As policy makers, we try to find the laws that need to be amended or created to promote safer communities out there, and we depend on our public safety professionals to provide those recommendations," said Delegate Smith.

Delegate Smith added that the LOC seeks to open a police academy on the Navajo Nation, as well as a Navajo post that would be inclusive of all public safety divisions and require certain certifications to increase accountability and skill sets for personnel.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) also urged the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety to work closely with chapter communities and identify the unique issues that each community may face, and continue to provide recommendations for potential policy changes.

Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee chair Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz't'I'í) said it is important to recognize the harsh realities of violence being normalized on Navajo land, intergenerational trauma, and challenges with community leadership.

"This system, as it currently is, has been neglected for so many years that we are re-victimizing our people. I am here to listen, I am here to hear from the subject-matter experts, and to see how we can work together so that this is not another listening session, but to offer opportunities for our people," said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty said it was important to never lose sight of improving the criminal justice system because the Navajo Nation is the voice for the most vulnerable, the children, the elders, persons with disabilities, and all Diné citizens. The future is uncertain with the change in administration at

the federal level, but the Nation must continue to advocate for public safety resources, said Delegate Crotty.

The Public Safety Summit began on Monday, Jan. 30 and will conclude on Friday, Feb. 3.

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