# 23rd Navajo Nation Council
## Office of the Speaker

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

## Council members meet with New Mexico leaders to advocate for Navajo issues

**SANTA FE, N.M. –** On Friday, the New Mexico State Legislature held the 2018 American Indian Day and members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council took the opportunity to meet with several key state legislatures and officials, including New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez and New Mexico Speaker of the House Brian Egolf (D – Dist. 47), to discuss several issues, including the Navajo Nation's legislative priorities for the 2018 New Mexico State Legislative Session.

In January, the Council's Naabik'íyáti' Committee adopted the Navajo Nation's legislative priorities for the 2018 New Mexico State Legislative Session, which included securing state funds for Capital Outlay projects, increasing Navajo Nation representation on the Tribal Infrastructure Fund Board, providing additional funds to improve school bus routes, and advocating to address hate crimes and discrimination, sexual assault prevention, and human trafficking.

**PHOTO: (left to right) Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Speaker of the House Brian Egolf (D—Dist. 47), Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon, and Upper Fruitland Chapter president Lynlaira Dickson at the 2018 American Indian Day at the New Mexico State Capitol in Sante Fe, N.M. on Feb. 2, 2018.**

In a meeting with the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department Cabinet Sec. John Monforte, Council Delegate Steven Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a') and Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill), chair of the State Task Force, continued to address the challenges with the Real ID Act, particularly to address issues that Navajo elders still encounter problems when obtaining a driver's license or an identification card.

"I extend my appreciation to the state leadership for working with the Navajo Nation to resolve the problems with the Real ID Act, however, Navajo elders are still having problems with the

process. Extensive community outreach and other measures need to be considered to make the process easier for Navajo citizens who do not have the resources to meet the requirement," said Delegate Begay.

During a meeting with the New Mexico Indian Education assistant secretary Latifah Phillips, Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland), Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta), Delegate Witherspoon, and Delegate Begay discussed several issues including strengthening the culture program grant for Navajo Nation schools and establishing intergovernmental agreements to provide quality educational opportunities for Navajo children.

**PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates and New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez at the 2018 American Indian Day at the New Mexico State Capitol in Sante Fe, N.M. on Feb. 2, 2018.**

Council members also met with other state leaders including New Mexico Senator John Pinto (D – Dist. 3), New Mexico State Engineer Tom Blaine, Rep. Doreen Y. Gallegos (D – Dist. 52), and others.

Speaker Bates stated that the 23rd Navajo Nation Council would continue to work with New Mexico legislature and key state officials to address Navajo Nation issues and concerns.

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