Navajo Nation branches stand in solidarity to end human trafficking

WINDOW ROCK – On the opening day of the 2018 Winter Council Session, the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches came together to stand in solidarity against human trafficking on the Navajo Nation through an awareness walk and the signing of a proclamation officially declaring the month of January as the Navajo Nation Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

The walk began at the parking lot near Wells Fargo in Window Rock and concluded at the Navajo Nation Council Chamber. Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty
Through the efforts of the Naabik’íyáti’ Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee and the Navajo Department of Family Services – Strengthening Families Programs, both entities initiated the awareness walk, and a project to address human trafficking on the Nation, bringing to light confirmed cases that have aided in the development of new data indicating that trafficking activity is occurring in some Navajo communities, border towns, and truck stops.

Delegate Brown, a member of the SAP Subcommittee and the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, said human trafficking is a “silent” issue that many people might not notice, but its existence is present on the Navajo Nation.

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Delegate Brown added that he and his SAP Subcommittee colleagues have begun work on the Navajo Nation’s first Human Trafficking White Paper, and have started collaborating with the DFS - Strengthening Families Programs, Office of the President and Vice President, University of Colorado-Boulder Indian Law Clinic, Casey Family Programs, and the Navajo Nation Missing Persons Update Group.

The Human Trafficking White Paper will be a researched-based document that will allow the Nation to begin understanding human trafficking from a comprehensive and analytical perspective. Upon completion of the White Paper, a strategic plan would be developed to begin addressing human trafficking policies, laws, and post-vention protocols on the Navajo Nation.

Delegate Crotty thanked the Navajo leaders who participated in the awareness walk and said ending human trafficking on the Navajo Nation is a three-branch effort.

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Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, LoRenz0 Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland), expressed gratitude to the SAP Subcommittee for initiating the human trafficking project and thanked leaders who participated in the awareness walk.
“I appreciate all of you coming out this brisk morning and taking this walk. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to chairwoman Delegate Crotty, it was through her subcommittee on behalf of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, that we are bringing this awareness,” said Speaker Bates.
“Today is important, and we can’t let it end today, it needs to continue to be moved forward.”

Speaker Bates extended his appreciation to President Begaye, Vice President Nez, and Judge Benally for participating in the walk, and commended the signing of the proclamation declaring the month of January as the Navajo Nation’s Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

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