23rd Navajo Nation Council
Office of the Speaker

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Navajo leaders urge President Trump to sign the Ashlynne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act

Photo: Leadership commemorated the passage of the Ashlynne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act during a press conference held at the Arizona State Capitol hosted by U.S. Rep. Andy Biggs on March 28, 2018 in Phoenix, Ariz.

PHOENIX, Ariz. – On Wednesday during a press conference at the Arizona State Capitol, Navajo leadership along with U.S. Rep. Andy Biggs (R – AZ), state leaders, and tribal leaders from the Pasqua Yaqui, Ak-Chin, and Gila River Indian Community, came together to celebrate the passage of the Ashlynne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act by Congress.

The bill would amend the PROTECT Act to make Indian tribes eligible for U.S. Department of Justice grants that aid in implementing "America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response Alert"

systems, or AMBER Alert, for law enforcement agencies, if President Trump signs the bill into law. The act is named after Ashlynne Mike, an 11 year-old Navajo girl who was abducted and murdered on the Navajo Nation in 2016.

Speaker for the 23rd Navajo Nation Council LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T'iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) commended Congressional leaders for sponsoring and supporting the bill to ensure tribes have access to vital resources in implementing their own AMBER Alert systems.

"Thank you Rep. Biggs for inviting the Navajo Nation to be a part of this event to recognize the passage of the Ashlynne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act. Recognizing the fact that this was a bipartisan effort, we look to President Trump to sign this bill as quickly as possible. I also want to thank Sen. McCain, who played an influential role in sponsoring the senate bill," said Speaker Bates.

Speaker Bates also commended the Navajo Nation Naabik'íyáti' Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee for bringing awareness and education regarding child safety issues that exist on the Navajo Nation and advocating for the bill on behalf of Indian country.

Naabik'íyáti' 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'l'í) stated that the bill allows the Navajo Nation's current AMBER Alert system to be supported and stabilized.

Photo: Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty spoke at the press conference urging leadership to continue advocating for resources to support AMBER Alert, on March 28, 2018 in Phoenix, Ariz.

"The focus here is on Ashlynne Mike and the beautiful legacy that she provided, and sharing the stories with her family. As chairwoman for the SAP Subcommittee, we worked tirelessly with our federal partners and our leadership to not only identify the loopholes in our system to protect Navajo children, but the Navajo Nation asserting that we should have the federal funding authority on our Nation to protect our children," said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty called on state and federal leadership to aid the Nation in advocating for resources to improve its telecommunications infrastructure to ensure AMBER Alerts reach all Navajo citizens, and to provide safety for law enforcement that patrol and provide aid in the most rural areas of Navajo land.

Rep. Biggs thanked the parents of Ashlynne—Gary Mike and Pamela Foster—for their strong and vocal advocacy to pass the bill.

"There was a hole in the AMBER Alert system and this bill fills that hole, and that's critical. I wish we didn't have to discover that hole in such a tragic way, but my respect and thanks go to the

parents of Ashlynne Mike, who fought so hard and advocated for the passage of this legislation," said Rep. Biggs.

Pamela Foster, the mother of Ashlynne, expressed gratitude to leadership for creating the bill and obtaining bipartisan support in the spirit of her daughter.

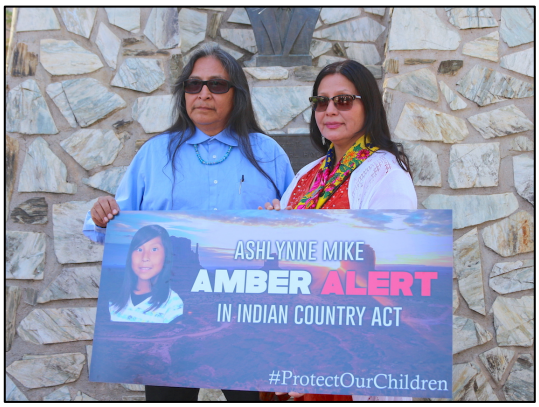

Photo: Gary Mike and Pamela Foster hold up a sign that commemorates their late daughter Ashlynne Mike at a press conference in Phoenix, Ariz. on March 28, 2018.

"It's always hard advocating. This is not easy. I still can't get over the loss, the pain is intense, and I still have nights I can't sleep. Days I wish I could see my daughter in her bedroom, or walking through the door coming home from school. I just want to say thank you to Sen. McCain, Rep. Biggs, Sen. Tom Udall, and Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, for all the work they have done to make this happen. This is monumental," said Foster.

Gary Mike commended Foster for her commitment and hard work in advocating for the AMBER Alert legislation and thanked leaders, and added that the next step is to get native communities involved in initiatives that seek to protect children.

"It's been the hardest two years of my life, and of course you can imagine how hard it is for Pamela and our children. With this bill, Ashlynne is crying from beyond the grave and her voice is heard. Her voice has been acknowledged with the creation of this bill. Again, I would like to thank everyone. What we need to do now across native communities is to advocate for child safety. Let's learn how to do that and send a message to everyone about how we can keep our children safe. This is a tool that we can all use, and of course we don't want anyone to go through what we went through," said Mike.

At the conclusion of the press conference, Foster and Mike were presented with a custom-made sign commemorating the passage of the Ashlynne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act with the portrait of Ashlynne, and the hashtag #ProtectOurChildren.

Also in attendance at the press conference were Council Delegates Nathaniel Brown, Steven Begay, Kee Allen Begay, Jr., and Tuchoney Slim, Jr.

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