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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
September 27, 2018

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

## Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty advocates for reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act

**Photo: Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty and other panelists participated in a roundtable discussion hosted by the Bipartisan Working Group to End Domestic Violence in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 26, 2018.**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. –** On Wednesday, 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) participated in a panel discussion hosted by the Bipartisan Working Group to End Domestic Violence. The dialogue between leadership centered on promoting advocacy for the reauthorization of the

Violence Against Women Act, or VAWA, and to promote prevention strategies and strengthening resources for survivors of domestic violence.

In 2013, VAWA was reauthorized by Congress and enacted by President Obama, and this year, the Act is being considered for reauthorization. The Act allows for tribal jurisdiction over non-Indians accused of domestic violence on tribal lands and provides tribes access to resources to improve public safety responses and services to victims.

The bipartisan working group is comprised of several members of Congress, both Democrat and Republican, whom invited Delegate Crotty along with other tribes to provide testimony as to how VAWA could benefit their Nations.

Delegate Crotty, who also serves as chair for the Naabik'íyáti' Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, said the Navajo Nation is currently utilizing provisions under VAWA such as receiving shelter funding for domestic violence victims and prevention resources. She also summarized the Nation's challenges in fully implementing VAWA's special prosecution of non-Indian offenders, the lack of funding and resources, and jurisdictional issues.

"We have to make sure we know the cost of VAWA if we decide to fully implement it, and that is the overall goal. Some of the challenges when we start prosecuting non-Native offenders are the rights that they have, getting bar certified judges, a jury of their peers, and then actually confining and jailing the offenders. There are costs that we are currently looking at while we continue to consider fully implementing VAWA," said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty said that although the majority of the crimes taking place on the Navajo Nation are between members of the tribe, she stressed that jurisdiction can be complicated between Navajo and outside law enforcement agencies in terms of tracking reports of non-Indian offenders and the actual occurrence of violent crimes they may be committing on the Nation.

Also in attendance were congressional leaders U.S. Reps. Tom O'Halleran (AZ – Dist. 1), Debbie Dingell (MI – Dist. 12), and Gwen Moore (WI – Dist. 4). In Sept., Rep. O'Halleran introduced H.R. 6728, the Native Youth and Tribal Officer Protection Act, which seeks to provide protections and expand tribal court jurisdiction over children who are involved in domestic violence situations, and tribal police officers that are assaulted or killed while responding to a domestic violence call.

"Last year we lost a Navajo police officer in the line of duty, Officer Houston James Largo, who responded to a domestic violence call that went terribly wrong. I want to extend my gratitude to Rep. O'Halleran for having the foresight to include children and officers, and I want to implore our congressional leaders to support H.R. 6728 in addition to the reauthorization of VAWA," said Delegate Crotty.

She stated that rates of crimes against Navajo women are higher than major metropolitan areas such as Detroit, and raised concerns regarding the Nation's capacity to fully implement VAWA

knowing federal funding is lacking with the amount of violent cases increasing. She reiterated that these are the real challenges that the Navajo Nation is experiencing as a large land-base tribe.

Other participants on the panel included domestic violence survivor Taryn Minthorn from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, attorney Brent Leonhard for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, chief justice Michelle Demmert for the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, and chief executive officer Erin Prochnow of the YWCA Cass Clay in Fargo, North Dakota.

Each panel member provided insight into issues and challenges within VAWA such as increasing protections for Indian women against non-Indian perpetrators, including Alaska tribes under VAWA despite their land status not being deemed as "Indian Country," and increasing victim centered services to break the cycle of domestic violence and promoting prevention.

"I would also like to thank Rep. Dingell and her staff for coordinating the panel discussion and continuing this important conversation in protecting our women and children. All too often Indian Country is not included in these discussions, and today we continue to advocate ensuring our seat at the table while holding our federal partners and leaders accountable. We all have the same goal – to end domestic violence," stated Delegate Crotty.

# # #

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council