24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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MEDIA CONTACT
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Navajo Nation Council members meet with New Mexico Governor

PHOTO: Speaker Pro Tem Seth Damon presented commemorative Navajo Nation inauguration items to New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham during a meeting at the New Mexico State Capital in Santa Fe, N.M. on Jan. 22, 2019.

SANTA FE, N.M. – Members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council met with New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and Cabinet Secretary Designee for the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department Lynn Trujillo on Tuesday. Council members also had the opportunity to meet with state lawmakers to discuss issues such as education, impact aid, capital outlay projects, and utility infrastructure.

State lawmakers provided Council members' updates on projects that pertain to their chapter communities, and to advocate for continued support from the New Mexico state legislature. Accompanying the delegates were Navajo chapter officials who are seeking to submit proposals requesting capital outlay funding.

Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahí, Whiterock) raised concerns regarding Executive Order #2013-006, which was implemented under former Gov. Susana Martinez that resulted in a lengthy process in which certain requirements had to be met in order for tribes to obtain state capital outlay funding.

“Gov. Grisham, we are also requesting that you rescind Executive Order #2013-006 because that affects our capital outlay initiatives. We are in a great position to continue and complete our capital projects, and rescinding this executive order cuts the red tape for us to maximize our funding and it streamlines the process to complete our capital outlay projects,” said Delegate Freeland.

Delegate Freeland added that the Navajo Nation amended their capital outlay process that addressed issues such as funding reversions, and stated that the Nation is now in a position to spend all funding received from the state and will utilize cost reimbursement.

PHOTO: Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham (left) and Cabinet Secretary Designee Lynn Trujillo (right) met with Navajo leadership in Santa Fe, N.M. on Jan. 22, 2019.

In response, Gov. Grisham stated that she was pleased to learn that the Navajo Nation has done well in improving their internal processes that have aided in completing and starting several capital outlay projects.

“I want to congratulate you all and tell you I am very impressed by the Navajo Nation on capital projects. I can see you have done a remarkable job to engage at that level of constructive effort, education, and productive shifts to administer your community projects and priorities,” said Gov. Grisham. “I look forward to working with the Navajo Nation to continue that momentum.”

In addition to capital outlay, 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) stressed to Gov. Grisham who served as the former New Mexico Secretary on Aging and Long-Term Services, that there needed to be a stronger focus on Navajo elderly issues.

“We also need an emphasis on our elders and the Secretary of Aging plays a critical role in that. [Secretary Designee] Trujillo, we also need you engaged for funding from the house bills to our elderly, the type of food they receive, and the infrastructure that is allowed for them. We want what’s offered here in cities like Santa Fe to also be offered to our elders on the Navajo Nation. They deserve the dignity and respect to receive these services, they earned it and we appreciate any support you can give to them,” said Delegate Crotty.

Gov. Grisham responded by recommending that the Navajo Nation Council invite the newly appointed secretaries to a regular council meeting to continue the dialogue and identify additional needs and gaps in services to New Mexico Navajo communities.

At the conclusion of the meeting, 24th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Pro Tem Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí’, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) thanked Gov. Grisham for taking the time to meet with Navajo leadership and said that the Council had scheduled a

supplementary meeting with her office on Jan. 31 to talk more in-depth about matters concerning the Navajo Nation.

"I want to thank you for giving us the time to meet with you Gov. Grisham. I know this is the first of many open discussions and dialogue with your office and this Council, either individually with my colleagues' communities or collectively for our Nation. We are hoping to continue that trust between the Navajo Nation and the state of New Mexico. We look forward to working with you for the next four years," said Speaker Pro Tem Damon.

Also in attendance at the meeting were Council Delegates Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Nathaniel Brown, Eugenia Charles-Newton, Pernell Halona, Jamie Henio, Vince James, Rickie Nez, Raymond Smith, Jr., Charlaine Tso, Daniel Tso, and Edmund Yazzie.

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