



# 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council

## Office of the Speaker

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 12, 2019

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## **Council Secures State Funding for Shiprock Judicial/Public Safety Facility**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Following the persistent advocacy of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, the state of New Mexico has appropriated \$3.15 million for the Shiprock Judicial/Public Safety Facility project from capital outlay funds.

Delegates Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock) and Mark Freeland (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahí, Whiterock) pushed the project in meetings with New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's staff and legislators representing Navajo chapters in February.

"This project has been on the books for over a decade and prior administrations had not moved it forward," Delegate Charles-Newton said. "I would like to specifically thank Senator Pinto, without whom this funding would not have been possible. His direct advocacy with his colleagues and the governor will greatly benefit the state and Navajo Nation's public safety."

In April, the existing Shiprock Public Safety Facility, built in 1959, will close due to building health and safety issues, including the presence of mold, lead, and asbestos. In addition, the Shiprock Judicial District Court, located adjacent to the public safety facility, has similar structural conditions and was built in 1972.

According to the Division of Public Safety, the Shiprock Public Safety Facility has a significant work load, responding to thousands of calls annually.

Averaging 60 visitors daily and handling a caseload of 6,782, the Shiprock Judicial District had the second highest caseload among Navajo Nation judicial districts from 2015 – 2017.

The Northern Navajo Judicial/Public Safety Facility project will consolidate the Police, Corrections, and Judicial programs into a 115,000 square ft. facility at an estimated cost of \$77 million for planning, design and construction.

As a former New Mexico capital outlay specialist in the prior Navajo executive administration, Delegate Freeland played a critical role in navigating the available funding options at the state level.

“It was an effort on the part of Council to expedite this project and address the dire public safety concerns of Northern Agency. I’m thankful to Governor Lujan Grisham for responding to the Council’s advocacy,” stated Delegate Freeland.

At present, the Navajo Nation Council has appropriated \$3.15 million from the Judicial/Public Safety Special Revenue fund. The Council will continue to advocate for similar matching funding from the states of Arizona and Utah for Navajo Nation judicial and public safety facilities with regional and statewide significance.

“The 24th Council is a special, dedicated group. Our delegates saw an essential need, gathered the necessary supporting documents, and worked up until the last minute to advocate and make this happen,” stated Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). “I would like to extend a special *ahéhee*’ to all of the Navajo Nation’s state legislators for supporting and advancing this essential regional need. Your work is recognized by the Council.”

Delegates Pernell Halona (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl’a’a’) and Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahat’a Dziil, Tsé Si’áni, Wide Ruins) also met with legislators and governor’s staff in February to press for chapter capital outlay and public safety funding.

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