



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL  
Office of the Speaker

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New investments to connect rural Navajo communities to fast, reliable internet a top priority for the Navajo Nation Council

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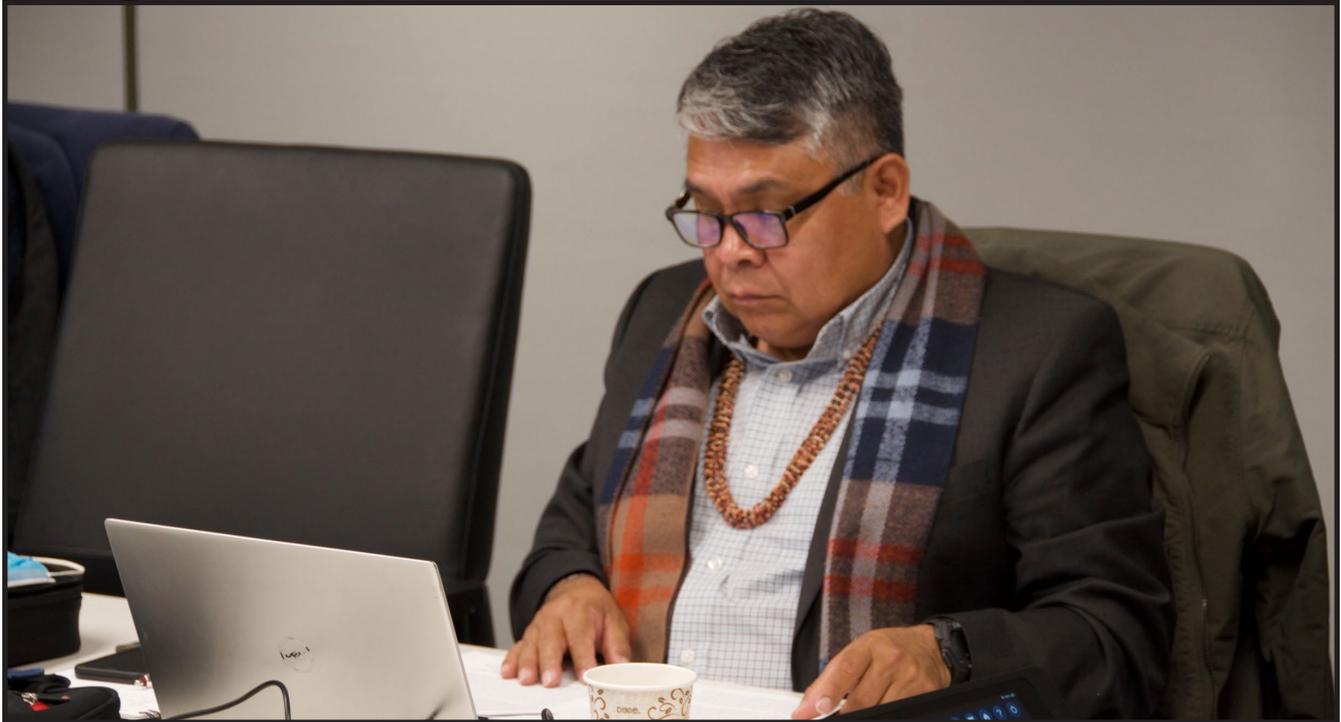


PHOTO: Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. represents the Navajo Nation in Washington, D.C. to discuss Navajo priorities with congressional leaders.

**BLANDING, Utah** — Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. of the 24th Navajo Nation Council was joined by Coconino County Supervisor Lena Fowler for a work session with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA), the Navajo Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NNTRC), and Arizona and Utah county officials to strategize and develop a comprehensive plan on bridging the broadband internet gap across the Navajo Nation.

The meeting was held at the Utah Navajo Trust Fund Office, including attendance from multiple telecommunication entities like AT&T, Emery Telcom, Choice Wireless NTUA, and the Arizona Commerce Authority.

“The key goal of the working group is developing a consistent message and infrastructure plan, so the Navajo Nation is positioned for large broadband and fiber-optic investments in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. We are working on projects that will install high-speed fiber-optic conduits for rural internet providers along Interstate 17 and Interstate 40. The next major broadband initiative is connecting Highway 191, which runs through Navajo land. Combined, these new connections will uplift small businesses, improve public safety, and create smart highways in the region,” said Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain).

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In January, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey announced millions in funding for Smart Highway Corridors to install over 500 miles of broadband conduit and fiber optic cable along designated highway segments throughout rural areas of the state. The Arizona Department of Transportation has begun installing fiber-optic cable along Interstate 17, between Camp Verde and the I-40 Interchange in Flagstaff, Ariz.

“We need to connect all parts of our growing state. Rural areas still lack high-speed Internet. Let’s triple our investment in Rural Broadband Grants and also invest \$50 million in Smart Highway Corridors to install broadband along our rural interstates. This will make our highways safer and smarter than ever before and pave the way to get all of rural Arizona logged on,” added Governor Ducey.

In February, a new underground fiber-optic line was completed by NTUA and its partners to increase internet capacity for local schools and businesses and the Tuba City Regional Health Care Center. The Navajo Nation Council accomplished this by allocating over \$32 million in CARES Act funding through Resolution No. CN-89-20.

“It is estimated that around 800,000 households in Arizona are either underserved or have no broadband access. And more than 90% of tribal nations are currently going without high-speed internet, which must change. The Navajo Nation Council is committed to allocating over \$1 billion in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to construct cell phone towers in rural areas, water and electricity lines, and expand broadband fiber-optic access so our families can be connected,” said Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tónaneesdizí).

In addition to advocating for rural broadband connectivity, the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee passed Resolution No. NABIAP-21-20 requesting Governor Ducey to include Highway 191 in the Smart Highway Corridor Initiative to install broadband conduit and fiber optic cables through the communities of Wide Ruins, Ganado, Chinle, Many Farms, Rough Rock, Rock Point, and Mexican Water, Ariz.

“We commend the working group for leading the charge to expand broadband fiber-optic access for rural areas of the Navajo Nation. ‘Smart Highway’ technology will include control of overhead message boards, traffic cameras, weather stations, and wrong-way driving detection technology. Connecting Highway 191 means connecting the center of the largest Tribal Nation in the United States to the internet. Future infrastructure projects will help lay the groundwork to solve major broadband problems affecting our school districts, chapter houses, and small businesses,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

Last year, 45 rural households in Coconino County used internet access brought to them by state-of-the-art satellites made by SpaceX. This beta technology is currently available near Tuba City, where there was no service before.

In a statement, Supervisor Lena Folwer added, “We know the critical need for quality, reliable internet access to rural Arizona. Our families and workforce need to be connected to compete in today’s market, grow their education, and enhance their quality of life. Coconino County, once again, leads the way by providing internet access through an innovative and resourceful partnership with SpaceX.”

Next week, the Naabik'iyati' Committee will host a work session to discuss Legislation No. 0086-22, sponsored by Council Delegate Mark Freeland, and Legislation No. 0087-22, sponsored by Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty, to appropriate \$1,070,298,867 billion in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for the construction of new water and electric lines, broadband internet connections, and housing infrastructure projects for the Navajo people.

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