



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

MEDIA CONTACTS

Alray Nelson, Communications Director
Kyrn Hardy, Public Information Officer
E-mail: nnlb.communications@gmail.com
Phone: (928) 565-0440

Navajo Nation Leaders and Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham discuss Education, Infrastructure, and Law Enforcement Priorities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 23, 2022



PHOTO: Council Delegate Mark Freeland, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, BFC Chairman Jamie Henio, and HEHSC Chairman Daniel Tso discuss Navajo Nation priorities at the Roundhouse in Santa Fe, N.M.

SANTA FE, N.M. — Members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council and Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham met at the Roundhouse in Santa Fe to discuss the top priorities of the Navajo people for New Mexico. Budget and Finance (BFC) Chairman Jamie Henio, Health, Education, and Human Services (HEHSC) Chairman Daniel Tso, and Council Delegate Mark Freeland were in attendance.

Topics of discussion included road and water infrastructure projects, support for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) movement, the Indian Family Protection Act, and ensuring key provisions of the Yazzie-Martinez court decision are fully implemented.

State Senator Nancy Rodriguez (D-NM) is the sponsor of Senate Bill No. 212 that was passed last week by the New Mexico Senate and House of Representatives allocating \$14.8 million in Capital Outlay Funds for Navajo chapters.

“Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham continues to advocate for the communities of Tóhajiilee, Alamo, and Ramah. Our chapters that are located in the rural areas of the Navajo Nation are working hard to get the resources and assistance they need. The governor is committed to upgrading our roadways to my three chapters and understands the importance of fully funding the Tóhajiilee and Albuquerque water project. Bringing electricity and water to our elders and those most in need of

– MORE –

help is a top priority,” said Chairman Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee).

Projected appropriations for capital outlay projects in the eastern agency of the Navajo Nation is over \$8 million. The Tóhajiilee, Alamo, and Ramah Chapters will receive around \$1.6 million for bathroom additions, chapter renovation costs, internet system improvements, roadway upgrades, and the construction of new electric power lines.

In 2018, Judge Sarah Singleton ruled that all students have a right to be college and career ready and that the state is failing to meet this obligation. New Mexico has a 70 percent graduation rate, low proficiency rates in reading and math, and high rates of students in remediation classes while attending college.

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) Chairman Daniel Tso (Littlewater, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake, Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Ojo Encino, Counselor) shared that New Mexico has a trust responsibility to meet the court-ordered obligations of the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit. He added, “The governor must sign House Bill 2 that will allocate millions of additional funding for the Yazzie-Martinez priorities to be implemented by the Indian Education Division. The court ascertained that the constitution of New Mexico assures equity in education for all Indigenous students. The increased funding for the Public Education Department will help assist schools to offer better services for an equitable education for our schools. Sovereignty in the classroom is the first step to protecting our future and New Mexico has an obligation. We commend the leadership of Assistant Secretary LaShawna Tso for her hard work during this legislative session and for being a champion for our Native students.”

If signed into law, Senate Bill No. 212 will provide around \$1.3 million to Navajo Preparatory School for building construction costs, security upgrades, and broadband internet improvements. In addition, House Bill No. 15 would allocate \$4 million for the construction of a Navajo Technical University (NTU) interdisciplinary building in Crownpoint and \$5 million for a Diné College Student Services Building in Shiprock.

“158 years ago, our ancestors walked through these streets of Santa Fe to Fort Sumner during the Navajo Long Walk. The removal of the Kit Carson name from all public buildings in New Mexico will separate this dark history experienced by our Navajo people. Kit Carson is someone that should only be remembered for perpetuating genocide. The governor supports our effort to remove all public names associated with him and the dark legacy he leaves behind. We plan to work with state lawmakers to introduce a bill during the 2023 legislative session to make this change permanent,” said Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint).

In November, the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee passed Resolution No. NABIN-44-21 supporting the removal of Christopher “Kit” Carson from all monuments, state parks, government buildings, highways and streets within New Mexico.

State Representative Georgene Louis (D-NM) is the sponsor of House Bill No. 135 to enact the Indian Family Protection Act that would consolidate provisions for child custody proceedings involving Indigenous children, creating a Tribal Affairs Office within the Department of Children, Youth and Families Department, and more.

“State leaders must work with us to address this crisis and provide necessary protections under the law to protect our relatives from violence. We commend Senator Shannon Pinto, Senator Lynda Lopez, Representative Georgene Louis, and the women within the Navajo Nation Council for their outspoken leadership. Our surviving families deserve a call from law enforcement to solve their cases and a government that fights for them,” said Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé’áłnáoozt’íí, Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gad’ii’áhi/Tó Ko’i).

On Thursday, Madam Chair Crotty will join Governor Michelle Luajn Grisham and state lawmakers at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque, NM, for a signing ceremony of two bills.

After being signed into law, Senate Bill No. 12 will establish an Office of Missing Indigenous Persons within the Attorney General’s Office. Senate Bill No. 13 will create an annual event to support New Mexican families with missing relatives by bringing together federal, state, and tribal law enforcement.

###