



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IGR Committee approves resolution requesting the Council of Large Land Based Tribes for support in protecting Dook'osliíd

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Monday, the Intergovernmental Relations Committee passed legislation requesting the Council of Large Land Base Tribes for their support of the Navajo Nation and other indigenous nation's efforts in protecting Dook'osliíd, the San Francisco Peaks. The Council of Large Land Base Tribes will consider the IGR legislation, which is sponsored by Honorable Thomas Walker, Jr., at its annual meeting held in Las Vegas, Nev., on Dec. 9-10.

Honorable Walker said his legislation is an effort to garner support from the Council of Large Land Base Tribes, which would help in obtaining a Letter of Allegation from the United Nations against the U.S. to uphold its human rights obligations as a U.N. member-state.

"The Council of Large Land Base Tribes is an organization that works cohesively on addressing issues near reservation lands," Walker said. "From time to time, the Navajo Nation gets resolutions passed by the Council of Large Land Base Tribes, and we seek their support in addressing the issues of the San Francisco Peaks. The support from the Council of Large Land Base Tribes would add to the indigenous support we have from throughout the rest of the world in helping obtain a Letter of Allegation from the U.N. against the U.S."

The Council of Large Land Base Tribes includes the following tribal nations: the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Northern Arapahoe Tribe, Chippewa Indian Tribe, Crow Nation and Shoshone Bannock Tribes, among others.

On May 17, the IGR Committee passed legislation authorizing the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission to submit communication to Professor S. James Anaya, special rapporteur of the United Nations, on the human rights violations and fundamental freedoms of Navajos and other indigenous peoples, as it pertains to the proposed desecration of the San Francisco Peaks.

In August, the Navajo Nation alongside the Hopi Tribe, Havasupai Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, Hualapai Tribe, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, and many other tribal nations stood strong and unified against the Arizona Snowbowl's proposed contract amendment to have the City of Flagstaff sell potable water to the ski resort for snowmaking purposes on the sacred peaks. The united tribal front ultimately made a significant difference in the Flagstaff City Council's decision to disapprove the substitute water sale agreement to make artificial snow at the Arizona Snowbowl.

However, U.S. District Court Judge Mary Murguia of Arizona ruled Dec. 1 in *Save the Peaks Coalition, et al v. U.S. Forest Service* that snow made with wastewater is safe to ingest. The district court ruled against the Save the Peaks Coalition, and nine other plaintiffs, which includes the Navajo Nation. The Save the Peaks Coalition was established in an effort to address environmental and human rights issues caused by the proposed ski development by Arizona Snowbowl on Dook'osliíd.

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The Navajo Nation among other tribes maintains its stance against any desecration to the sacred peaks, including artificial snowmaking.

Leonard Gorman, Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Executive Director, said Judge Murguia's ruling indicates that the court favors federal agencies over indigenous peoples.

"I believe that it's up to the scientific community to determine scientific claims, not the courts," added Gorman. "It is interesting to learn that a federal agency makes note that data exists contesting the health risk, but finds it appropriate to continue with the development at the Arizona Snowbowl ski resort."

Honorable Lawrence T. Morgan, Speaker of the 21st Navajo Nation Council, said the decision of the court is disappointing to indigenous peoples throughout the world, particularly the plaintiffs in this case, which includes the Navajo Nation.

"The court's decision essentially means that the U.S. continues to ignore the worldviews and religious freedoms of indigenous people in this country, as well as allowing the desecration of sacred sites of the First Americans," Speaker Morgan added. "This is a significant issue that has gained global momentum all the way to the United Nations. As indigenous people, we will continue our unified front in fighting for our fundamental rights. The court's decision will not hinder our efforts, we will keep fighting on."

In addition to the San Francisco Peaks issue, the Council of Large Land Base Tribes will receive reports from the Navajo Division of Health and Health and Social Services Committee regarding the "Changes, Challenges and Opportunities with the Health Care Reform." The body will also receive a report from the Transportation and Community Development Committee regarding Indian Reservation Roads, as well as reports from other tribal nations.

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