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Navajo President Offers Support of Creating an Arizona Indian Affairs Department

PHOENIX – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly said he supported a bill that would create an Indian Affairs Department in Arizona while testifying before an Arizona legislative committee Wednesday morning.

President Ben Shelly testifies in support of bill SCM 1010 before the Arizona Senate Committee on Government Reform on Feb. 8 in Phoenix.

"Our hope is that the state promotes the early involvement of tribal governments in the development and implementation of state programs and policies affecting tribes and Native American communities throughout the state," President Shelly stated before the Arizona Senate Committee on Government Reform.

SCM 1010, a bill sponsored by Sen. Jack Jackson, would create a cabinet level Indian Affairs Department in Arizona.

President Shelly added that not only would the department open lines of communications with the state and tribal governments, misunderstandings could be avoided as well.

"We need to have a forum to communicate each other's issues," President Shelly said. Tribal lands comprise about 28 percent of Arizona and the Navajo Nation estimates that 70 percent of money earned on the Navajo reservation is spent off the reservation.

The bill is expected to go before the full Arizona Senate for vote.

Hopi Tribal Chairman LeRoy Shingoitewa also testified in support of the bill.

"With SCM 1010, we can open the lines of strong communications," President Shelly said.

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