Navajo President Shelly Encourages Division Leaders to Find New Ways to Compose Tribal Budgets

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly said with pending federal budget cuts, the Navajo Nation budget needs to be creative and innovative to ensure direct services to the Navajo people.

“We are going to have to be creative to make sure the services our People are kept up. People are depending on their government to be fiscally responsible as well. During our several town hall meetings we held, our People said they wanted the government to be held accountable. We listened and we are making changes to make our government to more fiscally accountable, efficient, and responsible. This is the Shelly/Jim effort to reform our Navajo Nation government,” President Shelly said.

President Shelly added he expects the federal budget cuts by 5 to 10 percent this upcoming fiscal year.

“These are difficult times for our Nation’s budget, but I know we can succeed and make our budget work. The division directors were chosen for their ability to lead their divisions and now, we need them to lead their divisions toward success with a new way of budgeting,” President Shelly said.

“The overall goal here it to streamline our services. We must do this for our people and practice financial responsibility. We are capable of doing this. We have showed our strength in the past. We are creative people, now we need to do more with less when it come to budgeting,” said President Shelly.

In June and July, the Three Branch Chiefs and their staff met several times and agreed upon overall priorities for the Navajo Nation. The three branches, judicial, legislative and executive, worked to merge their priorities because there were many goals that were similar across all branches.
“This is the first time overall priorities have been identified by the Navajo Nation. This allows us to focus our work and put our money to areas that are important to the Navajo People,” President Shelly said.

The summarized list of priorities is as follows:

1. Protect the Public, Assets, Infrastructure, and Natural Resources and Enforcement (public safety) and Justice Services
2. Youth enhancement, Education and Culture/Language Preservation
3. Protect Sovereignty and Navajo Nation Treaty Rights
4. Improve Organizational Productivity and Efficiency
5. Provide Effective Service Delivery to the Navajo People
6. Develop the Navajo Nation Economy and Strengthen Financial Solvency

“Priority needs funding related to these areas will be considered first,” President Shelly said.

“Please use the Priorities, as much as possible, in developing your respective budgets,” President Shelly wrote in a memo to division directors.

“We are going to look at programs and projects that are aligned with the budget priorities first, then go down the line with the other priorities we established,” President Shelly said.

In addition, President Shelly said the executive branch is going to start performance based budgeting. “We can no longer spend our money without any type of planning,” President Shelly said. Each division and each branch was required to develop their strategic planning and create measurable goals to work toward during the fiscal year.

“A large part of our budget comes from the federal government. If they are going to start cutting budgets, then the Navajo Nation is going to have to get creative to make every dollar count,” President Shelly said.

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