



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly delivers State of the Navajo Nation to open spring session



President Shelly delivered the State of the Navajo Nation on Monday for the start of the spring session. He was joined by chief of staff Deswood Tome and executive staff assistant Pete Nez. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly shared a message of thanks and appreciation for the Navajo people to start the 2015 spring session.

The support and faith of the Navajo people motivated the Shelly-Jim administration to move the Navajo Nation into a positive direction, he said.

“In the last four years, I am proud to say my administration has won some battles, made historic progress and delivered on our campaign platform. When we stand together as Diné, we are a strong and undefeatable Nation,” President Shelly said.

The presidency of the Navajo Nation was extended by four months in the spirit of Ke’ and Hozho, he said, to provide continuity of services in light of the election process. However, stability was always a priority throughout the administration.

“Every day, the vice president and I have worked hard and in the best interests of our people to carry on until our last day in office,” President Shelly said. “

The new administration should move our infrastructure and business projects until they are finished.

“A good leader will do that,” he added.

The fact that 2,400 jobs were created during the administration illustrates that the administration’s primary goal of employment was achieved. This 300 percent job increase averages 600 jobs per year.

“Last week, New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez and I signed a tribal gaming compact that will benefit our economic future for the next 22 years, which means more jobs and support for infrastructure,” President Shelly said.

Another national leader listened to the needs of the Navajo Nation.

President Shelly met with Rep. Nancy Pelosi, minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, in March. He shared the Nation’s interest in energy development and stimulating the Navajo economy.

The big concern for many

Navajo people this week is the presidential election.

President Shelly said the referendum on the Navajo fluency requirements for the presidency should advance as planned by the Navajo Nation Council, rather than being decided by the Navajo Nation Supreme Court.

“I signed this legislation and approved the funds because as I’ve stated several times before, the Navajo people must decide on amending the fluency requirements for the presidential elections,” President Shelly said.

Beyond the election, other concerns facing the nation are budgetary.

For FY 2015, the Navajo Nation is facing an \$18 million revenue shortfall because of the declining price of oil. The following fiscal year will be an \$24 million shortfall.

The Sihasin Fund for the trust settlement needs to be reviewed thoroughly, the president said, especially the \$100 million that was taken off the top for set-asides.

Proper use of the settlement funds must be used for infrastructure development in form of roads, fiber optics, sewer lines and waterlines.

All the while, reinforcing relations with federal, state, county and tribal entities must continue for the benefit of the Navajo Nation. Such collaboration resulted in the paving of 27-miles of road on Navajo Route 20, after a landslide damaged U.S. Highway 89 in Feb. 2012.

U.S. Highway 89 was reopened last month and an official opening celebration is

forthcoming.

President Shelly said the Navajo Beef initiative was another showcase of collaboration for the Nation, this time between a national food service company and the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise.

Since 2011, Navajo ranchers and cattlemen have sold their beef to Labatt Food Service, which in turn, serves the beef at Navajo casinos. Not only does the program reinforce traditional ranching practices, but it also guarantees cattlemen top dollar for their beef.

Before concluding his address, President Shelly spoke of the new Shiprock Youth Center, a \$6.6 million facility funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The new facility will enrich the lives of Navajo children and provide them with healthy alternatives to drug and alcohol abuse, he said.

The loss of attorneys Sam Buffone and Elouise Chicharello were devastating to the Navajo Nation, President Shelly said. Buffone wored on the litigation strategy against the federal government for the trust settlement and Chicharello worked at Navajo Department of Justice for many years.

“Vice President Rex Lee Jim and I want to thank the Navajo people for allowing us to humbly serve you and the Navajo Nation. We must put the election behind us and move forward united, as a people, to face the challenges of the future,” President Shelly said. “Ahe’hee and hagone’.”