

Executive Branch Report

CHINLE AGENCY COUNCIL MEETING

Wheatfields, Ariz.



THE NAVAJO NATION
Office of the President and Vice President
July 11, 2015



Yá'át'ééh!

It is the awakening of a new dawn for the Navajo Nation. Our administration is doing things differently than previous leaders and we believe that the Navajo people have given us a mandate, through their vote, on what they want to see during our administration.

As such, we have four pillars that we will be focused on during our time of office, four mandates that have come directly from the Navajo people.

The first one is our Navajo Veterans. We will be working hard to ensure they are properly acknowledged and provided a helping hand with the issues they face. Our veterans are in need of housing and mental health counseling services for the post-traumatic stress syndrome they must deal with on a daily basis. They put their lives on the line for our nation and now it's time we provide the assistance they need.

The second mandate from the Navajo people is our Navajo Elders. They are the bedrock and foundation of our Navajo sovereignty. They too, must be properly taken care of and provided for, whether it is nursing homes or assisted living centers. Our youth are included in this effort, as they are both interconnected. We will encourage our elders to teach our youth our language and our culture to continue for the years to come.

The third mandate from our people is Infrastructure. Time and again we see countless trucks traveling the roads to haul water in huge barrels to provide their families with drinking water, but also for cleaning and bathing. Many of our people also haul water for their livestock. Beyond the water issues, there is also a tremendous need for electricity and power lines to provide basic life necessities that improve the quality of life.

The fourth mandate from the Navajo people is Job Creation and Employment. We have heard over and over again about the unemployment rate hovering at more than 50 percent across our nation. However, in some chapters, it is as high as 70 and 80 percent. We are planning on taking advantage of our desert economy to create jobs such as making creams, lotions and ointments from aloe vera and yucca plants.

From Capitol Hill to the Navajo Nation, you can rest assured that we have selected the best and brightest Navajos to help us with these mandates that came directly from the Navajo people. Please join us in this awakening of a new dawn. It is only by working together and with each other that these tasks can be completed. Ahe'hee.

NEW OPVP, CABINET APPOINTMENTS

We selected new appointments recently and we believe they will compliment the team that we have already assembled. The first is Teresa Hopkins, our new executive director for Navajo Telecommunications Regulatory Office. Her impressive career in the field of telecommunications will undoubtedly make a positive impact for the administration, we believe, and she will work with such technological areas such as broadband, cellphone coverage and how we communicate with one another. We also appointed Jamescita Peshlakai to serve as the Office of the President and Vice President Veterans Administration Liaison. A veteran of the Persian Gulf War, we know she will represent our Navajo veterans at the highest levels and her experience as a state legislator brings a wealth of knowledge to the table. We also selected Rick Abasta as our communications director for OPVP. His knowledge of the newspaper industry and tribal government will be beneficial in keeping our tribal members updated on news from the Executive Branch.

NAVAJO CODE TALKERS APPRECIATION EVENT

On July 4, we honored the Navajo Code Talkers at the Dean C. Jackson Memorial Arena. We said their strength and resiliency during World War II not only ended the war, but served as a prime example of the strength and power of Dine' bizaad, the Navajo language. Navajo Code Talkers John Kinsel, Sam Holiday, Thomas H. Begay and Roy Hawthorne were in attendance at the event and honored President Begaye and Vice President Nez.



Speaker LoRenzo Bates also honored the four brave men that proudly served in the U.S. Marine Corps as Navajo Code Talkers and set the bar for the many men and women that would follow in their footsteps for the generations.

N.M. TRIBAL LEADERS SUMMIT

On July 1 and 2, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye attended the N.M. State-Tribal leaders Summit at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort at Santa Ana Pueblo. Presidents, chairmen and governors across N.M. convened at the summit and spoke about issues relating to their respective nations, in particular Tribal Infrastructure Funding and Capital Outlay appropriations to address the needs on the reservations. President Begaye met with Gov. Susana Martinez and advocated on behalf of the Navajo Nation to address infrastructure development for N.M. chapters. He was also on the panel for economic development and led the discussions, focused in particular on increasing bond ratings for outside investors, leveraging funding for infrastructure projects and how the Navajo Nation invested \$26 million that grew to about \$2 billion.

SCOTUS RULINGS

The Supreme Court of the U.S. issued a ruling on same sex marriage a few weeks ago and the Navajo Nation OPVP was flooded with calls from media and persons interested in the decision. President Begaye said, “People must understand that we are a sovereign nation. We have our lawmakers and we support the laws that are in place. We stand behind the laws of what marriage is on the Navajo Nation. We’ve always said the people need to decide on these issues that impact our families and the future generations.”

The Supreme Court also presided over the Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission. President Begaye and Vice President Nez applauded the high court ruling in favor of the commission. President Begaye expressed appreciation for the Supreme Court honoring the values and voice of tribal people. “At the end of the day, it shows that the people won,” Vice President Nez said. “They voted through the ballot to create an independent entity to develop balanced districts throughout the state without political influence by elected leaders. It’s a win for the people of Arizona”

The Supreme Court also ruled that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency unreasonably interpreted the Clean Air Act when it decided to set limits on the emissions of toxic pollutants from power plants without first considering the costs on the industry. President Begaye said, “We value the health of our people. We lived with power plants that provided revenue and jobs to our nation, but also have been a source of health issues for our people. The ruling should be a call to the industry that they need to be more cognizant of the people that they serve.”

SANOSTEE FIRE SAFETY WARNING, FIREWORKS BAN

President Begaye issued a safety warning on July 2, after the Navajo Forestry Department reported a forest fire in the vicinity of Sanostee, N.M. on July 1. The fire was caused by lightning and was burning on a slope of the Chuska Mountain Range. BAI Fire Management responded to the scene, along with Navajo Hot Shots, Navajo Helitack and the U.S. Forestry Service Hot Shot crew.

President advised residents in the area to yield right-of-way to firefighters responding to the scene as they made their way to the impacted areas. He also advised against campfires in light of the forest fire.

Vice President Nez reminded tribal members that fireworks are illegal on the reservation and that the Navajo Nation Fireworks Code must be observed. He cited Navajo Nation Council Resolution No. CAP-18-86 as the tribal law that details the restriction under Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code.

NAVAJO NATION-ASU COLLEGE OF LAW MOA

The Navajo Nation and Arizona State University Sandra Day O’Conner College of Law are officially in collaboration to provide opportunities to Navajo students to attend law school.



President Begaye signed the agreement into law on June 30, approving the memorandum of agreement between the university and the nation.

“We are working with ASU for more Navajo attorneys. This agreement will provide Navajo law school students an opportunity to continue their education and one day return home to help the Nation,” President Begaye said.

According to the agreement, the parties will implement a program known as the Peterson Zah Legacy Fellowship, which will provide financial support and academic counseling to 15 Navajo Fellows and assist them with obtaining their Juris Doctorates at ASU.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said the agreement is an opportunity to bring home talented and educated professionals to assist with moving the Navajo Nation forward.

“My *nalí*, President Begaye, opened the door for many of our educated to Navajos to come home and help their people. We feel this program will continue that effort in the field of law,” Vice President Nez said.

The agreement will be in place for six academic years, continuing through 2020. Upon graduation, the participants will have commitment to work for the Navajo Nation for a period of five years.

CONCLUSION

The administration is off to fast start and we have hit the ground running. From lobbying more than 20 congressmen, congresswomen and senators on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. to meeting with the Branch Chiefs of the Navajo Nation, we are committed to serving the Navajo people.

There are many new developments that you will be hearing about very soon. We cannot disclose that information right now because they are still under negotiations. However, we are very confident the Navajo people will be happy with what will be achieved on their behalf.

As we stated previously, the only way such achievements can be done is by working together, including our Navajo chapters across the nation. We look forward to working with you on projects in the future. Ahe’hee!

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