



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly pays respect to fallen officer Alex K. Yazzie



FARMINGTON, N.M.—Thousands of people gathered.

The funeral services for fallen Navajo Police officer Alex K. Yazzie was emotional.

Police officers, fire fighters, emergency medical personnel and other first responders answered the call to pay final respect to one of their comrades.

They came from different states, different counties and different tribes. But the common thread was that they all worked to serve the public and the greater good.

Members from the U.S. Armed Forces were also in attendance, with many wearing the dress uniforms in honor of the departed.

A large American flag draped between two cranes fully extended marked the entrance to the Pinon Hill Community Church, which was filled to capacity. Police officers stood along the

walls of church interior in a protective circle.

For those unable to be seated, they stood in the back and watched the proceedings, while hundreds of other stood outside the church and waited.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly provided remarks.

He said the Nation is grieving and saddened by the loss of a tribal officer that gave his life to protect others.

“I would like to thank all the law enforcement officers that are here from the different agencies. Thank you for being with us and with the family,” President Shelly said.

Police officers face many challenges: stress and emotional toll, he said, adding that interaction with the public is usually met with a sharp eye and equally cutting words.

“The people you stop, they never have a nice word to say to (officers.) They chew on you, they give you a hard

time,” President Shelly said. “Domestic violence calls are the most dangerous.”

In spite of this, brave men and women don the uniform and protect their communities, he noted, with the understanding that they have only three to six seconds to react in dangerous situations.

Beyond those daily challenges, Navajo Police have to work with less. Whether it’s funding to purchase equipment, pay salaries or simple manpower, there’s not enough to cover the tremendous land base of the Navajo Nation, he added.

The times are changing.

“When I was growing up, I remember a non-Navajo, hungry or thirsty, another Navajo would pick him up, feed him and give him water,” President Shelly said. “What’s today’s world? Right now, if you’re in that situation, you get beat up or you get killed.

“These are Navajos I’m talking about. Society is changing,” he added.

With the increase population and changing social values, President Shelly said more funding is needed from the federal, state and tribal governments to properly equip officers for changing times.

“We are shorthanded.

Believe it or not, the Navajo Police officers that are here, one officer has to cover 1,282 persons. Farmington has more officers as whole, than the Navajo Police as a force,” President Shelly said.

Upon concluding his address, President Shelly presented the family of Alex K. Yazzie the Navajo Nation Flag and saluted his brave service and tragic sacrifice.

Officer Alex K. Yazzie was buried at Memory Garden Cemetery.