



# THE NAVAJO NATION

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Talk is over and action is needed now on the Former Bennett Freeze Area says President Begaye**

WINDOW ROCK-President Russell Begaye said it's time for action in developing the Former Bennett Freeze Area for Navajo residents.

The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) and division directors will tour the area on Thursday and Friday, Oct. 15 and 16.

"Over the years there have been numerous studies done on the Former Bennett Freeze Area. Departments and programs have talked about putting infrastructure in place, putting housing up for residents or providing electricity and water," President Begaye said. "However, nothing has really taken place. Up until this point it's all been talk and no action."

Vice President Jonathan Nez agreed and said it's time to stop studying the area and start acting.

Realizing concerns of Former Bennett Freeze Area residents in a completely tangible way is a priority of the Begaye-Nez administration.

"Our motivation is to hear directly from the impacted people. Their cries have gone on for far too long," President Begaye said.

The Bennett Freeze was enacted by Robert L. Bennett in 1966 to address an ongoing land dispute between the Navajo and Hopi Tribes. In 2009, President Obama repealed the law that created the freeze. The period in between left the area stagnant to development with residents in homes or make-shift housing without water or electricity.

"Our people's homes and corrals have needed upgrades but the freeze prohibited it. For 40 years, our people had to secretly make repairs to their homes. There were no improvements for electricity, plumbing, or clean drinking water," Vice President Nez said. "Our people have been forced to live in 1966 for 40 years."

Bringing leadership to the table with residents is a way of empowering the people to have immediate involvement in the process.

"Family needs to be involved. Community needs to be involved," he said. "We need to build families and reinstitute the old way of life where we support one another. It's nothing new, it's a Native concept. We need to return to that way of life."

President Begaye has committed his entire executive branch to focus on the area.

"Too many promises have been made over the last forty-nine years and I think our people are beginning not to believe what they hear," he said. "We want to let our people know that we are going to do something that should have been done years ago."

The tour of the Former Bennett Freeze Area and consultation with residents will depart from the Tolani Lake Chapter House on Thursday, Oct. 15 at 9:30 a.m.

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