MOU BETWEEN NAVAJO NATION AND ADVS WILL OPEN DOORS TO EXTENDING VETERANS SERVICES SAYS PRESIDENT BEGAYE

FLAGSTAFF-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye joined Arizona Department of Veterans Services (ADVS) Director Wanda Wright today for a ceremonial signing of a Memorandum of Understanding that allows ADVS to accredit Navajo Veteran Service officers.

“The Begaye-Nez administration made a sincere commitment to serve our veterans in extending and providing services to them. In the past, it has been political rhetoric. With us, it’s real,” President Begaye said.

The MOU between the Navajo Nation and ADVS affords Navajo Veteran Service officers access to all Veteran’s Affairs infrastructure to file claims on behalf of Navajo veterans. Veterans will no longer have to travel to an office outside of the Navajo Nation to get proper services.

“It opens the door for our ability to serve the Navajo Nation which has a high percentage of veterans per capita,” Director Wright said. “This allows us to reach these veterans and provide services to them right at home.”

Wright said the recently passed Navajo Veterans Act, which defined the Navajo Veteran’s Affairs Office as an organization, allowed ADVS to be able to accredit Navajo Veteran’s Service officers.

“The Veterans Act is so significant. Without the Veteran’s Act we couldn’t have established this MOU,” President Begaye said. “The Veterans Act has opened so many doors at the state, county and federal levels. We’re looking forward to our people getting the type of services that are delivered at the federal level.”
President Begaye said through the Veterans Act, he was able to recently sign another agreement for a voucher service for homeless veterans provided through Veteran’s Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH).

“We now have the VASH voucher program on the Navajo Nation. Now, homeless Navajo veterans in places like Flagstaff, Page, Phoenix and Tucson will have the program extended to them regardless if they are situated on the Navajo Nation or not.”

President Begaye extended thanks to the Navajo Nation commanders and staff at all the area veteran agencies as well as OPVP Veteran Liaison Jamecita Peshlakai for committing to this MOU and seeing it through on behalf of Navajo Veterans.

During the signing, Peshlakai said that since the Begaye-Nez administration took office one year ago, tremendous strides have been made for Navajo Veterans.

“Today is a historic day for the Navajo Nation and the state of Arizona as we work together for the rights of our veterans,” she said. “We have all reached out to each other and we all have a stake in this together.”

Peshlakai acknowledged Coconino County Board of Supervisors Chair Lena Fowler and District Director for U.S. Representative Ann Kirkpatrick, Ron Lee for their attendance at the signing. NAU President Rita Cheng, the Native American Student Center office staff and NAU Student Veterans Service Center staff were also in attendance.

“This is another huge step and opportunity for veterans to be served on the Navajo Nation,” President Begaye said. “I want to express my sincere appreciation to ADVS Director Wanda Wright for making this happen. Thank you for making it possible for us to be certified through your agency.”

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