



## Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay reflects on the Judiciary Committee's highlights of the past year**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Many Farms/Round Rock), Chair of the Judiciary Committee, is proud of the many accomplishments of 2007. Begay is excited to report a few highlights of the past year and is looking forward to the challenges in 2008.

The Judiciary Committee is one of 12 committees that provides direction and oversight to Navajo Nation programs. The Judiciary Committee provides oversight to the Judicial Branch, one of three branches of the Navajo Nation government.

In their oversight function of the Judicial Branch, the Judiciary Committee helps in managing courts on the Navajo Nation. The courts provide judicial services to more than 250,000 Navajos to a reservation that spans 27,000 square miles throughout the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

The Judiciary Committee's mission is to provide adequate and efficient judicial services to the Navajo Nation.

Among the highlights of the Judiciary Committee in 2007 was the permanent appointments of several judges, among them were Chief Justice Herb Yazzie with the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. Yazzie was appointed by a vote of 64-2 and the legislation was sponsored by Kee Allen Begay.

Begay also sponsored legislation to appoint five District Court judges to permanent appointments. The judges included: Irene S. Black, Genevieve Woody, Rudy I. Bedonie, Carol K. Perry, and Louise Grant.

The Judiciary Committee also heavily lobbied the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council for an increase in the 2008 General Funding allocations for the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch.

In other lobbying efforts, the committee successfully secured \$2 million for the Dilkon Court Facility from the Arizona State Legislature. The state of Arizona will appropriate \$1 million in fiscal year 2008 and will appropriate another \$1 million in 2009, which brings a combined total of \$2 million from the state legislature. Matching funds of an additional \$2 million was also secured from the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation Supreme Court facility is also in the works, the Judiciary Committee is requesting \$11.6 million from the U.S. Congress. The Navajo Nation Council also appropriated \$1.5 million for preconstruction activity for the Supreme Court facility as well.

The Judiciary Committee was also successful in initiating a 1 cent sales tax

increase for the Judicial/Public Safety Facilities Fund, which will help in funding five judicial and public safety facilities in agencies around the Navajo Nation.

The Council passed this legislation during its 2007 Winter Session. The Fund Management Plan is currently in place for the utilization of the sales tax funds.

Begay also said that another highlight of the year was the establishment of District Courts in Aneth, Utah and in Pinon, Ariz. The Pinon facility is currently in the planning stages, but will be in full motion shortly.

The Judiciary Committee also had several key meetings with state officials this past year. On April 10, 2007, the committee met with Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano regarding funding for the Dilkon Court facility. The committee also met with Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. on June 28, 2007, the committee requested \$6 million from the Utah State Legislature for the Aneth Court facility.

Begay also explained that U.S. Rep. Rick Renzi (R-Ariz.) continues to support the Navajo Nation on national issues and has supported issues related to tribal justice and its funding issues. The committee met with Renzi on April, 12, 2007.

The committee also hosted a meeting regarding the Diné Fundamental Law on June 15, 2007 at Diné College in Tsaile, Ariz. A subcommittee under the Judiciary Committee is currently reviewing the law and is formulating their recommendations.

Delegate Begay said that the Judiciary Committee was successful in many areas in the past year, but was unsuccessful in obtaining funds from the Navajo Nation Permanent Trust Fund in the amount of \$153 million. This money would have been used for the construction of several Judicial/Public Safety facilities on the reservation.

"The Judiciary Committee has been extremely busy," Begay said. "We are hard at work for the Navajo people and we will continue our hard work into the New Year."

For more information, contact Joshua Lavar Butler with the Office of the Speaker at 928-871-6384.