



## The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Navajo Council delegates Maryboy, Filfred ask Northern Agency Caucus to support idea of keeping funds in Utah**

**MONTEZUMA CREEK, Utah** — Members of the Northern Agency Caucus convened for a special meeting to discuss issues related to the Navajo Utah Trust Fund, as requested by Navajo Council delegates Kenneth Maryboy and Davis Filfred (Mexican Water/Aneth/Red Mesa) at the Utah Navajo Health Systems office on Saturday, Feb. 28.

The Navajo Utah Trust Fund issue has re-emerged recently after the state of Utah relinquished its trust responsibilities of a fund which has accumulated \$18 million and has put the U.S. Congress in a position to name a new trustee for the account.

There have been varying views regarding who should be designated the trustee. Members of the Northern Agency Caucus invited Aneth community members and provided them the opportunity to express their concerns. Most of the community members strongly support the idea of the money remaining in Utah to be administered by a subsidiary non-profit limited liability company created by Utah Navajo Health Systems (UNHS).

The UNHS outlined its proposal to members of the Caucus and proposed the responsibility of administering the revenues from the trust fund be given to the newly created organization. The UNHS reported six Navajo chapters in Utah who have passed resolutions expressing their desires to keep the trust fund monies in Utah to benefit Utah Navajos.

The Trust Fund was created in 1933 when the federal government passed legislation creating the Aneth Extension Act, which required 37.5 percent of oil royalties provided by the Aneth Extension go into a trust fund overseen by the state of Utah. This trust fund would then be used for the health, education and general welfare of the people living on the Aneth Extension. It was agreed 62.5 percent would be set aside for the Navajo Nation every year.

The court case *Pelt vs. the state of Utah* was a class action lawsuit filed in federal court in 1991 and a federal ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Tena Campbell ruled the federal government be the ones responsible for the royalties from the oil and gas generated from the Aneth Extension.

In 2008, during the general session of the Utah State Legislature, H.B. 352 was passed recognizing the repeal of the Utah Navajo Trust Fund. The bill shifted responsibility of the trust fund to the Department of Administrative Services and provided a transition process until the U.S. Congress designated a new recipient of its royalties.

On Feb. 10, the Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council passed a resolution approving and recommending the drafted federal legislation permanently repeal the Act of 1933 and the Act of 1968, and permanently designate the Navajo Nation as the new trustee of the funds.

According to Maryboy, the Caucus members approved the testimonies made by the Utah Navajo leaders and made a directive to the Caucus to rescind an IGR resolution and draft another to support Utah Navajos.

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