



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Navajo Nation's Three Branches move forward with BIA and IHS budgets**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Members of the Navajo Nation Council, Vice President Jonathan Nez, and Acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan met on Monday, and agreed to move forward together in presenting a unified voice to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Services in regards to the budget formulations for Fiscal Year 2016 and beyond.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) pointed out that the proposed BIA budget for FY2016 includes an overall increase of eight-percent, or approximately \$12.2 million. While the proposed IHS budget increase could range from five-percent to 22-percent.

The Nation will have to issue its recommendations for the increased BIA budget by early January, according to Speaker Bates. BIA Navajo Area officials are scheduled to meet with Navajo Nation officials on Wednesday to further discuss the Nation's recommendations and priorities.

"I want us to strive for one voice," stated Speaker Bates, referencing the need for the Nation to prioritize and advocate strongly for "big picture items" such as public safety, natural resources, or the Former Bennett Freeze Area.

On Nov. 12, the chairs and vice chairs of the Standing Committees met and discussed the budget formulations and determined that the three branches of government would need to be involved in finalizing the Nation's budget priorities in relation to the "One Nation, One Voice" priority agreement that was finalized in July.

Vice President Nez, who attended in place of President Russell Begaye, said the Office of the President is determined to produce tangible results and improvements in the Former Bennett Freeze Area and has held several discussions to determine the use of approximately \$1 million of BIA funds that may be used to purchase heavy equipment to construct earthen dams in the area.

Acting Chief Justice Sloan focused on the need for improved facilities for the Judicial Branch, pointing out that the Nation's Peacemaking Program and Window Rock Office of Probation and Parole Services are being relocated due to mold found in their facilities.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), chair of the Law and Order Committee, also advocated for judicial facilities along with healthcare needs and increased funding for public safety on the Navajo Nation.

Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) said that in addition to aligning the priorities, the Nation should also analyze and revise its internal processes, particularly as it relates to procurement procedures, which often delays progress for many projects.

“We need to look at our internal processes to actually get something done,” said Delegate Damon. “Yes, we can allocate money here and there, but our procurement process and other processes slow it down.”

Each of the three branches agreed to share recommendations as to how the increased federal funding should be used and will reconvene prior to presenting the recommendations to the BIA and IHS.

“We’re all in this together,” stated Acting Chief Justice Sloan.

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