



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Navajo Nation supports Congressional bills reaffirming the authority of the secretary of the Interior to place lands into trust**

*“Senate Bill 1879 not in the best interest of the Navajo Nation”*

**LEUPP, Ariz.** – The Naabik’iyáti’ Committee officially issued support on behalf of the Navajo Nation for S. 732 and H.R. 407, Congressional bills that reaffirm the authority of the secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior to place lands into trust for tribes.

Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii), sponsor of the legislation, said passage of the bills at the federal level would provide a technical remedy to a U.S. Supreme Court decision in the matter of *Carcieri v. Salazar* that resulted in a ruling that stated that the secretary does not have the authority to place lands into trust for tribes that were not under federal jurisdiction in 1934 when the Indian Reorganization Act was enacted.

A similar bill sponsored by U.S. Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), S. 1879, includes additional conditions on the secretary of the Interior in considering a tribe’s application for land into trust most notably encouraging cooperative agreements with nearby jurisdictions including any county, county equivalent, or other tribes with authority and control over land contiguous to the land under consideration.

“We do not support S. 1879, which would favor counties while undermining the sovereignty of tribes,” stated Delegate Phelps.

During last Thursday’s discussion, the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee unanimously approved an amendment proposed by Council Delegate Leonard Tsoie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) to add language stating that the Navajo Nation “respectfully requests of Congress to honor tribal sovereignty by not adding provisions that infringe upon tribal sovereignty.” Committee members voted 11-0 in support of the amendment.

Following the discussion, Naabik’iyáti’ Committee members voted 14-0 to approve Legislation No. 0394-15. The Naabik’iyáti’ Committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

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