



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

---

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 13, 2015

### MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253  
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174  
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

### **Council Delegates advocate for the Utah Navajo Trust Fund during the Utah American Indian Caucus Day**

**SALT LAKE CITY, UT** – On Thursday, Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) and council delegates attended the Utah American Indian Caucus Day, to meet with state leaders regarding issues facing the Navajo Nation, namely the Utah Navajo Trust Fund, education, tribal unity, and public land initiatives.

“One of the initiatives of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council is to elevate the Navajo Nation, and to elevate Indian Nations across the U.S., to be at a level where they are heard and recognized. That they have rights to the land they have in their possession,” said Speaker Bates, adding “We would support a cabinet level position [in the Governors Office], and I would put it in the form of a challenge to [the governor].”

In relation to land issues, Speaker Bates said that a trust fund for the Navajo Nation needs to be reinstated, so it may continue services to Navajo constituents living in Utah who are in need of the funding.

Utah Senate Bill 90 seeks to designate a new trustee of the Utah Navajo Trust Fund and requests that the State of Utah resume its fiduciary responsibility and management of the trust fund. The trust fund is derived from oil and gas royalties on the Navajo Nation located in the southeastern region of Utah.

“I think it is important for Utah to move the bill forward, and the Navajo Nation is seeking support from Gov. Gary Herbert on this initiative,” said Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Naa'tsis'Áán, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin). “Constituents I represent in Utah are depending on these funds to finally be released so they may begin receiving services and benefits in their area.”

House Bill 33 also impacts Navajo citizens, namely students who attend reservation schools in Utah. It was reported by the Utah State Office of Education that Navajo schools were failing and high school graduation rates are extremely low, resulting in an “achievement gap” as compared to other schools off Indian reservations.

Other important issues discussed at the American Indian Caucus Day included water rights, transportation and road improvements, and promoting the unification of tribes in Utah.

“We all need to work together, we all know the system, and we know how to use the system so it can work for each of us in a positive way,” said Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock).

Others in attendance were Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly, Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa), Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta), and Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi).

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit [www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org) or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council