



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Delegates advocate for issues and funding at Arizona State Capitol

WINDOW ROCK—On Tuesday, Speaker Pro Tem Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) along with 14 members of the Navajo Nation Council met with members of the Arizona State Legislature to advocate for issues and funding impacting the Navajo Nation.

The delegates met with Sen. Carlyle Begay (Dist. 7), chair of the House Health Committee Rep. Heather Carter (Dist. 15), and Sen. Bob Worsley (Dist. 25) who chairs of the Senate Transportation Committee. The meetings were held in conjunction with the 20th Annual Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day at the Arizona State Capitol.

Pro Tem Begay said a major area of concern is the proposed FY2016 budget introduced last Friday by Gov. Doug Ducey, which includes proposed cuts in funding due to the state's budget deficit.

"It is important that our leaders are informed of the possible impacts of the proposed budget so that we can continue to meet with state leaders to advocate for funding for Navajo communities," said Pro Tem Begay.

Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin), who attended Tuesday's meetings, said the Navajo Nation should receive a larger portion of tax revenue from the state's Transaction Privilege Tax and the Fuel Excise Tax.

"Each year, the people of the Navajo Nation contribute tens of millions of dollars to the state through the TPT and fuel excise tax and we are not receiving a fair share of the revenue," stated Delegate Nez.

On Monday, delegates met with Sen. Begay to discuss several issues including the state budget, education, taxation, energy, transportation, and the ongoing circumstances of liquor licenses used to operate liquor establishments near the community of Nahata Dziil.

Pro Tem Begay recommended the creation of a task force comprised of delegates to focus on Arizona issues and to work closely with state leaders to ensure that the Navajo Nation is able to better advocate at the state level.

Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins), who represents the impacted community of Nahata Dziil, met with Sen. Begay to discuss the liquor licenses owned by Gary McDonald, a Sanders resident who is scheduled to be sentenced after pleading guilty to several felonies.

“The ultimate goal for our people is to rid our communities of these liquor establishments that have devastated many people for years,” said Delegate Smith. “We want to have businesses that benefit the people and bring a positive aspect to the surrounding communities.”

During a joint session between the house and senate, Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) addressed state and tribal leaders, advocating for stronger communication between the Navajo Nation and state leaders.

“I am here today to tell each of you that the Navajo Nation and the State of Arizona are capable, much more effective, and much more resilient when we have open lines of communication with one another, and when we meet with one another to work through issues that impact our people and the state of Arizona,” stated Delegate Bates.

The 2015 State Legislative Session began on Jan. 12 and is scheduled to conclude on April 25.

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