



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 30, 2015

MEDIA CONTACTS

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

Navajo Nation presents united voice at Utah Native American Summit



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates, President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Council Delegate Davis Filfred, and Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown look on as Governor Gary R. Herbert signs a proclamation declaring July 30, 2015 as the official 10th Anniversary of the Utah Native American Summit.

PROVO, UTAH – Speaker LoRenzo Bates and members of the Navajo Nation Council’s State Task Force including Council Delegates Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Tom Chee, Nathaniel Brown, and Davis Filfred met with Utah Gov. Gary R. Herbert on Thursday, during the 10th Annual Governor’s Native American Summit.

President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez were also in attendance and provided remarks at the opening ceremony attended by Gov. Herbert, Lt. Gov. Utah Spencer J. Cox, and other Utah tribes including the Paiute Tribe of Utah, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, and the Confederate Tribe of Goshute.

Following the opening session, Speaker Bates, State Task Force members, and President Russell Begaye participated in a roundtable discussion with Gov. Herbert and delivered a joint letter outlining five areas in need of attention at the state level.

The five areas outlined in the letter are the Utah Public Lands Initiative, reauthorization of Federal Indian Bus Route funding, tribal consultation, transportation, and the reactivation of the Utah Navajo Trust Fund.

Aside from the issues outlined in the letter, Speaker Bates advocated for a stronger partnership between the state and the Navajo Nation by elevating the Utah Division of Indian Affairs to a cabinet level position within the Governor's Office. Currently, the Division of Indian Affairs is housed under the Utah Department of Heritage and Arts and receives little funding from the state.

"We want a cabinet level position to allow tribes to have true Nation-to-Nation consultation," stated Speaker Bates.

In regards to water rights, Speaker Bates and President Begaye indicated that the Navajo Nation is supportive of a negotiated compromise to settle water claims to the San Juan River in Utah, while acknowledging that such an agreement would require the approval of the Council. Additionally, they noted that the State of Utah has created a fund dedicated to water projects for the Navajo Nation, but that the appropriation of funds has been inconsistent.

Leaders from both sides also addressed ongoing efforts to preserve approximately 1.9 million acres of land known as Bears Ears, located in the southeastern portion of Utah. Gov. Herbert said that all parties have an understanding that certain areas should be protected and that all parties need to discuss the approach and process that it will take to do so.

Delegate Begay, chair of the State Task Force, held a work session among task force members prior to the meeting with the Governor where he stressed the importance of presenting a unified voice on all issues, particularly when addressing state and federal officials.

Speaker Bates and President Begaye informed Gov. Herbert and Lt. Gov. Cox of the "One Nation, One Voice" agreement that was signed by the three branches of government on July 20, which outlines nine priorities of the Navajo Nation.

Gov. Herbert said that many of the priorities of the Navajo Nation are similar to those of the State of Utah and that both sides should continue meeting on a regular basis to develop solutions and processes to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of progress.

Several members of Gov. Herbert's administration joined him at Thursday's meeting, including representatives from the Utah Department of Human Services, Department of Natural Resources, Public Safety, Department of Insurance, Division of Finance, and the Utah Department of Transportation.

Several officials commended the Navajo Nation for presenting a clear and unified position and stated that Thursday's meeting was the first time they could recall that the Navajo Nation had strong representation at the annual summit.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Speaker LoRenzo Bates extended an invitation to Gov. Herbert to attend a Council session to provide an opportunity to become more familiar with the needs of the Navajo People.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, search for keywords: Navajo Nation Council