



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation signs off on New Mexico Gaming Compact



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Council Delegates Leonard Tsoisie, Jonathan Hale, Nelson BeGaye, and Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise CEO Derrick Watchman look on as President Shelly signs the Gaming Compact.

WINDOW ROCK— On Tuesday afternoon, Speaker LoRenzo Bates along with Council Delegates Leonard Tsoisie, Nelson S. BeGaye, and Jonathan Hale were on hand as President Ben Shelly signed the Navajo Nation’s Gaming Compact with the State of New Mexico.

Speaker Bates, who chaired the Navajo Nation’s Gaming Task Force subcommittee under the previous Council, extended his appreciation to his Council colleagues, Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation Department of Justice, and outside attorneys for their persistent efforts.

“It was a very difficult and sometimes contentious negotiation that we undertook,” said Speaker Bates. “The Nation was persistent and the Nation never lost its focus.”

Once the Compact is signed by Gov. Susana Martinez, the Compact will be sent to the U.S. Department of the Interior for final approval.

Speaker Bates and President Shelly also signed a letter to Gov. Martinez during the signing ceremony in which it states, "The Navajo Nation is confident that we have reached terms that are fair, reasonable, and will continue to provide great benefits to the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico.

The Senate approved the Compact on March 11 followed by the House of Representatives on March 19, during New Mexico State Legislature's 60-day regular session.

Along with the Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, Mescalero Apache Nation, Pueblo of Acoma, and Pueblo of Jemez are also included as part of the proposed Compact.

Speaker Bates pointed out that the five tribes remained united throughout the process, which made the efforts much stronger and resulted in a Compact that is fair for all tribes and the State of New Mexico.

Delegate Tsosie acknowledged and thanked the many state legislators that supported and advocated for the tribes.

"It's important to recognize their efforts, both Indian and non-Indian state legislators," said Delegate Tsosie.

The Navajo Nation currently operates two Class III gaming facilities in New Mexico. The Compact will allow the Nation to convert its only Class II gaming facility to a Class III and eventually allow for a fourth Class III facility to be established as well.

The revenue sharing formula outlined within the proposed compact shows that revenue from the Navajo Nation to the State would escalate from eight-percent to nine-percent and to 10.75% over the duration of the 23-year compact which would expire on June 30, 2037.

In 2014, the Navajo Nation's three gaming facilities generated nearly \$80 million, while providing approximately 755 jobs and contributed approximately \$6.3 million to the State of New Mexico through revenue sharing.

NNGE CEO Derrick Watchman was also in attendance and thanked the Navajo Nation Council and President Shelly for their support, adding that the passage of the Compact brought relief for the 800 individuals employed in New Mexico by the Nation's three gaming establishments.

DOI will have 45 days to approve or disapprove. If no action is taken within that timeframe, the Compact will be deemed approved on the 46th day.

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