



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Speaker Bates calls for increased communication between the Nation's three branches of government to move Nation forward**

**WINDOW ROCK** – The 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council voted 13-2 to accept a report provided by Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) during the opening day of the 2016 Winter Council Session in the Council Chamber in Window Rock.

In the written report, Speaker Bates focused on the progress of rehabilitation efforts for the Former Bennett Freeze Area, the projected revenue shortfall for the Navajo Nation, Síhasin Fund expenditure plan, issues at the state level, water rights, and funding for the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project among others. Additionally, he also acknowledged that moving forward on the issues would require an increase in communication between the three branches of government.

“We cannot move forward and help our people without collaboration between the branches of government,” stated Speaker Bates. “I call upon President Russell Begaye and Acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan to communicate and meet on a regular basis with my Council colleagues and I to move us forward.”

In December, Council members established the Inter-Agency Task Force comprised of representatives from the Navajo Nation as well as Indian Health Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and the Navajo Housing Authority to coordinate the rehabilitation of the Former Bennett Freeze Area. Since then, members of Council have met with officials from each entity to discuss ways of bringing power lines and water lines to the area for homes and other facilities that are necessary to build communities and lead to economic development.

Speaker Bates also acknowledged the need for the Nation to secure water rights through agreements that bring prosperity to communities through water resources.

“No one will disagree that water not only gives life to our people, but it also allows our communities to thrive economically. In order to have businesses, public safety, homes, and other components that serve as the foundation for communities, we must first have basic infrastructure in place such as electricity and water sources,” added Speaker Bates.

The report also highlighted Council's support of a historic bond financing agreement that was finalized in November. The signing of the agreement is the result of decades of development that allows the Nation to authorize the issuance of bonds on the open market for first time in history.

“For years and decades, our Nation’s leaders have discussed ways of financing critical projects within our communities and by finalizing the bond financing agreement, it creates another avenue and additional financial leverage to fund such projects,” Speaker Bates stated.

The report also acknowledges the various subcommittees and task forces that have been established under the Council including the State Task Force, which consists of nine delegates – three from Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico.

The efforts of the task force have made an impact at the state level when advocating for issues such as the fair distribution of Transaction Privilege Tax revenue in Arizona, educational funding in Utah, and capital outlay funds in the state of New Mexico – issues that the Council and task force will continue to address as each of the three states continues with their legislative sessions.

Prior to accepting Speaker Bates’ report, the Council also accepted a written report from President Russell Begaye as well as a report provided by National Indian Gaming Association chairman, Ernie Stevens, Jr. The Council also unanimously accepted a verbal report provided by the Navajo Nation Youth Council.

Other reports included the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service, and the Office of the Controller. Written reports were also provided by the Office of the Attorney General, Acting Chief Justice, Navajo Housing Authority, and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority.

To view the full report from Speaker Bates, please visit [navajonationcouncil.org](http://navajonationcouncil.org) or click [here](#). The Navajo Nation Council is scheduled to reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday for the continuation of the 2016 Winter Council Session.

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