

2016 Arizona State Legislative Session Summary

Education

SB 1220, the Diné College-Navajo Technical University Compact Extension passed, extending the Dine College-NTU compacts for 20 years, with an additional 20-year term extension option after a state review. The Navajo Nation tribal colleges will receive up to \$52.5 million over the next 20 years. Diné College receives \$1.75 million a year for capital construction and building rehab, while NTU receives \$875,000 a year from Arizona Transaction Privilege Tax generated on the Navajo Nation.

Restoration of the \$29 million cut to Joint Technical Education Districts (JTED) made in last year's budget, which will avoid funding disruptions this year. Funding is restored for Northeast Arizona Technological Institute of Vocational Education (NATIVE); with a district that spans over 22,000 square-miles (all on the Navajo Nation) and 3 counties (Apache, Navajo and Coconino). District currently has about 2,200 CTE students and has 18 different CTE approved programs.

\$500,000 for the Code Writers Education Project, led by Senator Carlyle Begay to expand further Computer Code Writing and computer science programs at Chinle High School, Monument Valley High School, and Greyhills Academy High School. This allows students on Navajo to learn how to create projects such as video games, design an interactive website or build a problem-solving robot. Computer science skills through the program will allow students to gain the tools to put them on a path toward becoming researchers, scientist, IT experts, teachers, engineers, and much more.

\$250,000 expansion of the Tribal College Dual Credit Program Fund sponsored by Senator Carlyle Begay is one strategy to improve college readiness for students. These funds will give high school students the opportunity to get a head start on their college career – ultimately increasing their chances of completing their college degrees – by allowing them to enroll in college courses at Diné College and Navajo Technical University. Students have an opportunity to earn 12 or more hours of college credit prior to graduating from high school. Tribal colleges would be reimbursed from the Tribal College Dual Enrollment Program Fund for tuition and fees that are waived for dual-enrolled students.

SB 1239, State seal of bi-literacy sponsored by Senator Carlyle Begay, creates the State Seal of Bi-literacy program recognizing high school students who achieve proficiency in English plus at least one additional language, and require the seal to be affixed to students' high school diploma and transcripts. The Arizona Department of Education will recognize students who become proficient in one or more world languages prior to high school graduation, including a Native American language. A high school student who achieves the requisite level of proficiency in English and one or more languages would qualify for the seal to be affixed on their high school transcript and diploma. This allows Native American children the opportunity to learn their tribe's Native language in school and instills a sense of pride in students and their whole tribal community.

Navajo Veterans

HB 2323 Native American Veterans Tax Refund bill refunds taxes that should not have been withheld by veterans serving in the Middle Eastern conflicts while being enrolled members of a tribe. The budget establishes, retroactive to July 1, 2016, the Veterans' Income Tax Settlement Fund for the purpose of establishing a process to enable Native American veterans to recover state income taxes that were withheld from military pay. The budget appropriates \$2,000,000 from the state General Fund in FY 2017 to the refund for qualified applicants.

Health Care

SB 1457, Expansion of Children's Health Insurance Program "Kids Care," provides for 30,000 eligible children that do not qualify for other federal health programs. It will be managed by AHCCCS.

SB1238, Tribes, Child Safety; Health Care sponsored by Senator Carlyle Begay allows emergent placement with kinship or individual who isn't certified as a foster parent by allowing Tribes and Department Child Safety access to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database so that a name can be run through the FBI in order to immediately place while we are waiting for the fingerprints to come back. SB1238 will simply allow tribal social service agencies 24/7 access to NCIC so children are placed in a safe environment with someone the child knows instead of foster care or group home while waiting for the fingerprint clearance to come back.

SB 1507- ALTCS Dental Services restores \$3.1 million in funding for dental services for the elderly and physically disabled members of the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) and for the Developmentally Disabled (DD). Such funding is needed to provide emergency and preventative dental care for some of the most vulnerable adults in Arizona to maintain life reasonably free from dangerous and painful dental problems, and to protect them from devastating and life threatening conditions that are exacerbated by periodontal disease and infection.

Transportation

BIA Highway 60 Funding: the state budget included \$1.5 million for BIA Highway 60, which is a regional transportation corridor that links multiple Navajo Nation Chapter communities (including Pinon, Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Tachee/Blue Gap, Whippoorwill, Low Mountain) within Navajo County. Hopi 60 also serves as the primary access route for regional schools, health care facilities, first responders and other community resources in the region.

Navajo Rights and State Relations

SB 1219, Student Extracurricular Activities; Accessories passed. School district governing boards, charter schools, and interscholastic athletic associations with school members cannot prohibit a student from wearing a religious or cultural accessory or hair piece while participating in extracurricular or athletic activities if

it does not jeopardize the health or safety of the student or any other participant, as determined by the supervisor or officiate of the activity.

HB 2040, country boundary changes. It was scheduled for a hearing several months ago. Questions were raised, by Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr., Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Leonard Gorman, Senator Carlyle Begay and Rep. Albert Hale, as to what the impact would be to counties that serve the Navajo people from the bill's provision allowing county boundary changes. The bill was held in deference to Navajo's concerns.

SB 1237 changes the Arizona Commission on Indian Affairs to the Governor's Office on Tribal Relations. This bill also defines the Office's duties. It requires each state agency to develop and implement tribal consultation policies with Tribes, seek input from appropriate Tribal officials before undertaking any action or policy that will affect a Tribal community or its members, and integrate input generated from tribal consultation into the agency's decision-making processes to achieve mutually acceptable solutions. It also requires the Governor to meet annually with the Tribal Leaders of the 22 Tribal Nations and Communities in a State-Tribal Summit to address issues of mutual concern.

Social Services

\$1.2 million for the construction of an Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) in Chinle, Ariz. In collaboration with the Chinle Regional Business Development Office, Council Delegate Leonard Pete, the state of Arizona and Senator Carlyle Begay, will construct a DES building along U.S. Highway 191 to accommodate a larger service area including Chinle, Many Farms, Lukachukai, Wheafields, Nazlini, Rough Rock, Whippoorwill, Low Mountain, Pinon, Blue Gap, Cottonwood, Kitsille, White Valley, Hard Rock and Cove.

HB2614, Cooperative Associations sponsored by Rep. Rick Gray and Senator Carlyle Begay will directly impact Navajo communities of Tolani Lake, Leupp and Bird Springs to create a new Cooperative Business model to allow Tolani Lake Enterprises to build a hydroponics greenhouse to grow food using purified reused gray water and captured rainwater. This will allow Tolani Lake Enterprises to develop a team of cooperative workers to grow food and distribute the food in the community. Tolani Lake Enterprises Inc. (TLE) and Reentry and Preparedness (REAP), a nonprofit 501c3, will work together to build a greenhouse that will be owned by the community of Tolani Lake by establishing a community co-op. Developing a business model that relates to cooperative ownership within a greenhouse structure based food security system for our own communities.

Energy

SCM 1016, Rule Making Electric Generation, Unity. This Senate Resolution signals the State's position for the federal government not to overreach in regulation and harm Arizona's coal power industry. The Arizona Legislature urges the U.S. Congress to oppose the implementation of rules for existing electric generating units that exceed the legal authority of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.