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Council Delegate Seth Damon welcomes the New Mexico Indian Affairs Committee to Chichiltah Chapter

CHICHILTAH, N.M. –

Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) welcomed the New Mexico Indian Affairs Committee to Chichiltah Chapter on Monday, where the committee received reports from Delegate Damon, Gallup-McKinley County School

District, and several other entities from the state of New Mexico. Delegate Damon represents the small Navajo community, which is located approximately 14-miles south of Gallup, N.M.

The majority of Delegate Damon's report highlighted the progress that the Chichiltah Chapter and surrounding communities have made by effectively utilizing a combination of funding from the Navajo Nation and the state of New Mexico for infrastructure development such as new roads, facilities, and extended water lines and power lines. He pointed out that the new Chichiltah Chapter facility was constructed using funds from the chapter, the central Navajo government, and matching funds from the state.

"We are spending the money we received from the state and getting projects done," stated Delegate Damon, who also noted that the six chapters he represents are also searching for and applying for federal grants and additional funds to assist in the completion of projects.

He pointed out that although the local communities have been very proactive in completing projects, there still remains more than 330 families in Chichiltah and nearby communities that do not have running water.



PHOTO: Council Delegate Seth Damon addresses the New Mexico Indian Affairs Committee at Chichiltah Chapter on July 24, 2017.

As chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, Delegate Damon said he and his colleagues are devoting a large portion of their time to finding ways to diversify the Navajo Nation's economy and making it easier to make long-term investments that grow the Nation's financial portfolio.

The Council approved legislation sponsored by Delegate Damon in 2016 that allocated \$150 million from the interest earned from the Permanent Trust Fund to finance economic, agricultural, and community development projects in each of the five agencies, and a separate bill sponsored by Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) for an additional \$180 million from the Síhasin Fund for water sanitation and infrastructure projects – both of which exemplify the Navajo Nation's willingness to strengthen its infrastructure to support economic development, added Damon.

In addition, in 2014 the Chichiltah Chapter received \$250,000 from the Nation's Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for power line projects, which was made possible through legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat).

We need to show state leaders that we are going to bat for ourselves, while also using outside funding to help our people," added Delegate Damon.



PHOTO: Chichiltah community members listen during a meeting of the New Mexico Indian Affairs Committee at Chichiltah Chapter on July 24, 2017.

Delegate Damon said similar to the budget difficulties the state of New Mexico has dealt with, the Navajo Nation's comprehensive budget for the upcoming fiscal year will be challenging due to the decline in oil and gas prices that contribute millions of dollars to the Nation's revenues each year. Additionally, the anticipated federal budget cuts will create more challenges in providing direct services to the Navajo people.

Near the conclusion of the report, the Indian Affairs Committee voted to request a report on the anticipated federal funding cuts and the potential impacts to all of the tribes within the state of New Mexico.

Prior to concluding his report, Delegate Damon said he believes the Council has developed an "outstanding" relationship with New Mexico legislators and said he hopes to continue working closely with state leaders to leverage funds and create more opportunities for Navajo communities and people.

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