



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. continues advocacy for increased public safety funding at federal level

WASHINGTON D.C. – Last week, Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) continued his advocacy to secure increased federal funding at the most recent Tribal/Interior Budget Council session.

The TIBC meets on a quarterly basis each year for the purpose of providing a forum and process for tribes and federal officials to develop annual budget requests for tribes under the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Delegate Begay serves as the chair of TIBC's Public Safety Justice Workgroup, which serves as a budgetary advisory group for public safety and justice services funding for tribes. He also serves as a member of the Navajo Nation Council's Law and Order Committee, which has worked aggressively to secure pay increases for Navajo police officers, to provide improved retirement services, and to construct more homes on the Navajo Nation for police officers.

During the workgroup's meeting, Delegate Begay recommended that tribes receive federal funding directly rather than having multiple agencies involved which often delays the delivery of funds to tribes.

"Each year, tribes receive federal funding through a lengthy and complicated process that involves multiple agencies," said Delegate Begay. "If we developed a better streamlined process then tribes would receive funding directly and eliminate delays."

TIBC members were also provided an update on the recent omnibus appropriations bill that was passed by Congress last week and signed by President Trump on May 5. The passage of the bill will fund the federal government through the current fiscal year. The government had been operating under a continuing resolution, which was set to expire at midnight of May 5.

According to the report provided at the TIBC session, the overall budget for the Bureau of Indian Affairs will increase by 2.3 percent for the remainder of the current fiscal year.

The omnibus appropriations agreement includes approximately \$385 million for public safety and justice programs, \$202 million of which is for criminal investigations and police services. It also provides a \$1 million program increase to implement the Native American Graves Protection and

Repatriation Act \$96 million for detention and corrections, \$10 million for law enforcement special initiatives, and \$30 million for tribal courts.

Delegate Begay stated that \$385 million may seem like a large amount, however, the amount received by the Navajo Nation will be much less when the funds are distributed among all tribes.

Law and Order Committee chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) and Delegate Begay said the committee is planning to meet with members of the Navajo Nation's congressional delegation to continue advocating for increased public safety and judicial funding.

Delegate Yazzie said the LOC remains committed to helping law enforcement and the Judicial Branch, and also thanked his LOC colleagues for their work and dedication.

The Navajo Nation is scheduled to host the next Tribal/Interior Budget Council meeting in July, and Law and Order Committee members are planning to meet with the BIA and other officials to prepare in advance for the upcoming TIBC meeting.

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