



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Speaker Bates: Council respects the votes of the Navajo people

WINDOW ROCK – The Navajo Election Administration held a referendum election on Tuesday, in which Navajo voters decisively voted against the proposed Transportation Stimulus Plan that sought to utilize \$216 million over the course of six years, at \$36 million per year, from the Permanent Trust Fund for road improvements in each of the Navajo Nation’s 24 regions.

“The Council respects the outcome of the referendum and the votes of the Navajo people,” said Speaker Bates. “It is now time for the Nation’s leadership to regroup, and move forward together and continue putting forth initiatives that strengthen our Nation’s infrastructure.”

Speaker Bates said he is thankful to his Council colleagues for putting forth the referendum and allowing the Navajo people to decide the outcome.

“We need leadership that is willing to propose ideas and that’s what this Council did and I am thankful for that,” added Speaker Bates.

He added that the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, since taking office in January 2015, has taken on the challenge of improving the Nation’s infrastructure by approving \$180 million from the Síhasin Fund for bulk water infrastructure projects that are now under construction, and an additional \$150 million from the interest earned from the Permanent Trust Fund principal for infrastructure and economic development projects that are now being constructed.

“As leaders of our Nation, the Begaye-Nez Administration and the Council need to come together and work together on large scale proposals. My invitation to the President to sit down, have a cup of coffee, and talk remains open,” Speaker Bates said.

Speaker Bates also called on President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez to clarify a statement they issued on Oct. 24 following the outcome of the referendum, in which they stated that the Nation receives “over \$500 million a year to address the road conditions on Navajo.”

The Navajo Division of Transportation has reported that the Nation receives \$54 million annually from the Federal Highway Administration and an additional \$6 million from the Nation’s fuel excise tax. They estimate that only \$37 million of the \$54 million is used for the actual construction or maintenance of roads after pre-construction obligations are met.

“A very important question to ask is if the Nation is receiving \$500 million a year, as indicated by the President and Vice President, then how are those funds are being used and why are we not seeing road improvements at a larger scale?” asked Speaker Bates.

Speaker Bates once again stated that the Council remains committed to meeting with the President Begaye and Vice President Nez to move the Nation forward through collaborative initiatives that will build a strong infrastructure for many years to come.

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