



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Delegate Crotty, Missing & Murdered Diné Relatives working group demand accountability from Office of the President and Vice President

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Nov. 26, 2019 – On Tuesday, President Trump issued an executive order to establish a missing and murdered indigenous women inter-agency task force in which Vice President Myron Lizer and his wife Second Lady Dottie Lizer were present at the signing in Washington, D.C.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'ahí/Tóko'í, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tséahnáoz't'í) expressed concerns regarding the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President participating in the signing and called for increased transparency between the OPVP and the Missing & Murdered Diné Relatives working group.

“The MMDR working group initiated work on the missing and murdered issue on the Navajo Nation in March, and we were happy to invite the OPVP to the table and met with them at that time regarding these issues. We have extended several opportunities since then to their office and have not received any consultation regarding the work we have completed on MMDR. We are sad to see that the OPVP continues to leave us out of these crucial meetings with high-level leadership,” said Delegate Crotty.

“On behalf of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, I wish to express a deep concern with the approach the Office of the President and Vice President has taken in addressing the issues of Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives and Indigenous People. Though widely publicized, their involvement has not reflected the best of the Navajo Nation’s efforts to tackle this issue head-on. We will continue to directly consult with the families and communities of missing and murdered Diné relatives and continue to extend the invitation to the Office of the President and Vice President to join us in actively engaging in this ongoing ef-

fort,” said Speaker Seth Damon.

Delegate Crotty added that after meeting with the OPVP on MMDR during the spring, it spurred their office to join the cause and create a missing persons task force, however it is an internal group that is not open to the public. Delegate Crotty successfully advocated for funding for the task force to hire additional victim advocates and a crime analyst. The status of hiring for those positions by OPVP’s task force is currently unknown.

In March, through the leadership of Delegate Crotty and the support of the Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker, the MMDR working group began developing a strategic plan to support families in addressing missing and murdered relatives. In June, August, and November, the working group held three community forums and established numerous partnerships with grassroots organizations, non-profits, and the Arizona and New Mexico MMIW task forces—who continue to consult and work directly with the MMDR working group.

“The work of MMDR is ongoing and we are incredibly happy that our partnering stakeholders honor our work and consult with us as we all are finding solutions to the missing and murdered crisis. We will continue to work directly with the families because it is our goal to recover our missing relatives and provide justice to our Navajo relatives,” said Delegate Crotty. “We call on President Nez to provide the same courtesy because we are all working towards the same goal—credit does not belong to one entity alone.”

Meskee Yatsayte, founder and volunteer advocate for the Navajo Nation Missing Persons Updates, stated she had hoped President Jonathan Nez would continue monthly meetings as promised with families of the missing and murdered, however he has only met with the group once in August since December 2018.

“The Navajo Nation Missing Persons Updates advocates are now collaborating with Delegate Crotty and the MMDR working group, a wonderful collective of grassroots volunteers. This group has dedicated individuals that are determined to make a change for our Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives, and they have been proactive with families and communities making impactful changes. The OPVP leadership and staff could benefit by attending the MMDR community forums and team meetings, in person, so we can make a difference together,” said Yatsayte.

The MMDR working group is a collective of volunteer members working to establish a data institute to track missing and murdered cases, support Navajo law enforcement, and to provide research on the issue to develop solutions and provide policy recommendations. In addition to the data institute, the working group continues to hold community forums and is developing a community toolkit that would directly aid families who may have a relative that has gone missing.

Delegate Crotty and the Office of the Speaker have supported a candlelight vigil to encourage community members to engage with the effort. Additionally, multiple legislation for MMDR/MMIW have been introduced over the previous months fully establishing the Navajo Nation’s support for state and federal initiatives. The Legislative Branch has devoted multiple public outreach events entirely to spreading awareness of MMDR/MMIW. The Navajo Nation’s support of these issues will continue as it seeks more local and national partnerships through the working group.

For more information on the Missing & Murdered Diné Relatives’ initiatives, please email navajommadr@gmail.com or call (928) 380-4174.

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www.navajonationcouncil.org

MEDIA CONTACTS: Rick Abasta, Communications Director, (928) 530-8197
Byron C. Shorty, Sr. Public Information Officer, (928) 287-2085, nnlb.communications@gmail.com