Delegate Crotty testifies in support of cross-agency collaboration to address public safety, domestic violence and child abuse prevention

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 6, 2020

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Testimony was provided to the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) by Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé’ałnáoozt’i’, Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gad’ii’áhí/Tó Ko’i) regarding issues and recommendations for improving public safety services to victims and their families. The testimony was delivered during the 2020 Virtual Tribal Consultation hosted by the New Mexico District USAO on Oct. 21.

“During these consultations, the Navajo Nation continues to focus on requesting increased federal support for prevention and intervention services for victims of domestic violence and their families,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty gave additional recommendations to the USAO, including a request to discuss USAO participation in multi-disciplinary teams (MDT) and child protective teams (CPT), participants in the justice and victim services responses to crimes, and successes and challenges through this process.
In addressing the high rates of child sexual abuse and child abuse cases on the Navajo Nation, Delegate Crotty said, “We would like to focus on prevention, intervention, and victim services that include trauma-informed care. To be successful in protecting our youngest victims, the Navajo Nation needs to be aware of mandatory reporting agencies as well as the protocols and procedures of mandatory reporting.”

The USAO was requested to work more closely with the Navajo Nation Office of the Chief Prosecutor before potential cases were considered for prosecution and submission to the FBI or criminal investigators.

“Federal prosecutors sometimes decline to prosecute potential cases submitted to them from either the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) or our criminal investigators,” stated Delegate Crotty. “A federal detainer protocol was established previously to provide a clear protocol on how tribal members are released to federal law enforcement. The Navajo Nation requests a meeting with the USAO to discuss release and custody issues.

During the Office on Violence Against Women’s (OVW) 15th Annual Government-to-Government Tribal Consultation held Oct. 27-30, Delegate Crotty continued providing advocacy for Navajo victims and their families. Specifically, the consultation focused on streamlining the application process for tribal government grant programs within OVW.

“During the pandemic, our Navajo Domestic Violence Advocates and Shelter staff provided care for a Navajo mother and children who were held hostage for months. Their perpetrator used the ‘stay-at-home’ orders as a means to confine his victim and concealed the violence,” stated Delegate Crotty.

The testimony Delegate Crotty gave federal administrators emphasized the coordination of services to victims between tribal and federal agencies. Major Crimes, as contained within the Major Crimes Act, among Navajo people, trigger a process that involves a determination of jurisdiction for the case. At that point, the FBI has their victim specialists that then hand the case over to USAO victim specialists once a criminal complaint is filed. Services are concluded when the offender is sentenced.

“That process of determining the jurisdiction of cases, especially those involving domestic violence and child abuse, and then having that case given over to various agencies at different points needs to be coordinated. Our goal is to establish a seamless case management system so that victims and their families are given every opportunity to press their cases without having to focus on managing administrative relationships,” said Delegate Crotty.

During the winter months, Delegate Crotty stressed, the importance of a streamlined case management system becomes even more critical as families and households remain confined in closed spaces at greater rates. The potential for domestic violence during these months requires an entire system of support that includes justice services and other forms of assistance, including women and family shelters, to protect a victim and their families properly.

Delegate Crotty will participate in a listening session with the White House’s Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Native’s Operation Lady Justice Task Force on Monday, Nov. 9, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. ET. That session will focus on the Navajo Nation’s Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) and Navajo Nation Missing Persons Updates (NNMPU) efforts in establishing a data institute and spreading awareness of the missing and murdered crisis.

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MEDIA CONTACTS: communications@navajo-nsn.gov (928) 287-2085
Byron C. Shorty, INT Communications Director
Timothy Benally, Public Information Officer