



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Complete Count Commission Conducts First Meeting, Leadership Selected



The 10-member Navajo Complete Count Commission Census 2020 held its first meeting at the Budget and Finance Committee conference room in Window Rock, Ariz., on June 2, 2019. Five members are delegates appointed by Navajo Council Speaker Seth Damon, and Navajo President Jonathan Nez appointed the other five.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Navajo Complete Count Commission held its first meeting June 2 to select its leadership and identify priorities in conducting a Census 2020 awareness and outreach campaign throughout the Navajo Nation.

Oljato Chapter President James Adakai and Delegate Edison Wauneka (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) were selected as chair and vice chair, respectively, as the commission's first order of business.

Commission members received a two-hour training from the U.S. Census Bureau, which included an overview, outreach, operations, developing a budget, ways to incorporate media campaigns, and a committee timeline.

“The census for Navajo means money and power. Every year more than a half-trillion dollars, \$675 billion to be exact, is allocated to the people from the U.S. government,” said Arbin

Mitchell, a tribal partnership specialist with the U.S. Census Bureau. “You also elect leadership. Arizona added one seat in 2010, and it’s very possible they can gain another seat after the 2020 Census.”

Mitchell said the count helps forecast transportation needs, facility design for people with disabilities, and the distribution of Medicare dollars to states and tribes.

“This commission has a really diverse group of people that come from different backgrounds with different types of experience, and I know we will be able to contribute to the success of the 2020 Navajo census count,” said Delegate Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee). “We are already working well together and gelling with one another.”

The commission identified several action items such as whether respondents can be asked what their chapter affiliations are and if a resident is a veteran, active-duty military, deployed or not.

The commission also considered whether they should establish a subcommittee of technical advisors that could include the Navajo Housing Authority, Navajo Dept. of Workforce Development, and local Navajo Nation media outlets such as the Navajo Times and KTNN radio.

These discussion and action items will be discussed further along with two major topics; developing a comprehensive media plan that would include newspaper ads, radio spots, event promotions, and developing an operational budget for the commission.

“I remember at the last census they had a Rock the Census campaign that was geared for the younger generation,” said Kee Allen Begay Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Blue Gap/Tachee, Tselani/Cottonwood). “We need to start developing a strong media campaign for all ages.”

The commission approved its next meeting to happen Friday, June 14 at 3 p.m., at the Budget and Finance Committee conference room.

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