



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Delegates Advocate before Utah State Leadership at Governor's Native American Summit

OREM, Utah – Delegate Charlaine Tso (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tóíikan, Red Mesa) addressed six major topics to Governor Gary Herbert and the tribal leaders at the Utah Native American Summit on behalf of the Utah Navajo Commission and the Navajo Nation Council July 11.

Delegate Tso advocated for major Utah Navajo roads issues with respect to rights-of-way, B-road funding, State Route 162 and McElmo bridge, a direct in-state route for Navajo Mountain Chapter, and the Navajo Code Talker Highway-designated sections of State Routes 162 and 163.

“Having a seat at the table is what all of our tribal leaders have worked towards,” Delegate Tso stated, “We commend and encourage the State of Utah in its efforts to partner with us to serve the elders, students, and families of southern Utah.”

Delegate Tso also commended the Utah Attorney General's Office for delivering a supportive testimony to the Water, Ocean, and Wildlife Subcommittee of the United States Congress regarding the Navajo Utah Water Settlement Act. On behalf of the Utah Navajo Commission, Delegate Tso requested the state's remaining allocation of \$6 million into the trust fund for Utah Navajo communities' water projects.

Delegate Tso expressed appreciation to the Utah legislature and the Office of the Governor for providing \$1.1 million in matching funds for Phase II of the San Juan Fiber Optic Infrastructure Project. Phase I extended fiber to the communities of White Mesa, Bluff, and Montezuma Creek. Phase II will extend the fiber from Bluff to Monument Valley and then to Navajo Mountain.

Regarding the Bears Ears National Monument, Delegate Tso requested support from the state in seeking to increase Native American representation on the recently approved Bears Ears National Monument/Monument Advisory Committee. Delegate Tso shared that most members approved by the US Dept. of the Interior have opposed the creation of the monument and that the committee does not represent the best interests of all citizens.

Delegate Tso continued with a request that the State of Utah Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor and the Attorney General's Office monitor closely efforts to undermine Navajo voting rights in San Juan County. Delegate Tso pointed to specific efforts to separate the county as issues of great concern to the Commission.

Commending the 2014 Executive Order on Tribal Consultation, Delegate Tso advocated for the inclusion of the Utah Division of Indian Affairs in the governor's cabinet. Delegate Tso requested the governor's presence in the next town hall meeting hosted by US Representative John Curtis (R-03) on the Utah portion of the Navajo Nation.

Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer and Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahí, Whiterock) were also in attendance at the summit to provide further advocacy for the communities in the Utah portion of the Navajo Nation. Delegate Freeland chairs the Naabik'íyáti' Committee State Task Force, which advocates at the state level for the Navajo Nation.



PHOTO: Tribal leaders, including Navajo Nation Council Delegate Charlaine Tso and Vice President Myron Lizer, meet with Utah Governor Gary Herbert at the 2019 Governor's Native American Summit on Thursday, July 11, 2019 in Orem, U.T.

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