



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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New Mexico State Legislators invite Speaker Bates to present Navajo Nation priorities and initiatives

FARMINGTON N.M. – On Wednesday, Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) sought support for several issues impacting the Navajo Nation from New Mexico state legislators during a joint meeting of the state legislative Finance Committee and the Revenue Stabilization and Tax Policy Committee held at San Juan College in Farmington.



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates speaks to members of the New Mexico Finance Committee and the Revenue Stabilization and Tax Policy Committee at San Juan College in Farmington, N.M. on July 19, 2017.

Among the issues presented by Speaker Bates included the New Mexico Real ID Act, law enforcement needs, AMBER Alert funding, Navajo Indian Irrigation Project, Capital Outlay funding, and the Navajo Nation's efforts to leverage funding to subsidize the its \$180 million investment in water infrastructure projects.

Speaker Bates, Farmington mayor Tommy Roberts, and San Juan County commissioner Jack Fortner were invited by the committees to provide information regarding ongoing initiatives and priorities to the state legislators.

A portion of the report also touched on the efforts of the Council's Law and Order Committee to increase the number of police officers on the Navajo Nation, as well as to increase their salaries and benefits to help recruitment efforts. Speaker Bates also acknowledged the efforts of other subcommittees that have advocated for AMBER Alert and 9-1-1 system funding.

"The Law and Order Committee and the Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee have taken on the challenging task of coordinating with state officials and law enforcement to implement an Amber Alert system that will cover the entire Navajo Nation as well as a 9-1-1 emergency

response system – both of which are not provided in many parts of the Navajo Nation, particularly in remote areas,” stated Speaker Bates.

He also requested that state legislators address issues that are impacting elderly Navajo people in the state of New Mexico due to the implementation of the Real ID Act. The Act requires all New Mexico residents, including Navajo tribal members residing in New Mexico to renew driver licenses and identification cards to comply with new federal regulations.

New requirements include a birth certificate, social security card, and two forms of proof of identity – each of which present challenges to elderly Navajo people who were born in very rural areas and may not have been issued a birth certificate and those who live in areas that do not have official street addresses.

“This new law is affecting many of our people and the Office of the Speaker continues to receive calls and questions from constituents who are requesting assistance to resolve the issues,” added Speaker Bates.

Other areas covered in the presentation included Capital Outlay funding from the state, funding for the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project, Navajo Generating Station, and the Navajo Nation’s FY2018 Comprehensive Budget.

Speaker Bates thanked the legislators for inviting leadership to present at the joint meeting and said he is always willing to meet and discuss Navajo Nation issues with leaders from all levels of government.

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