



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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New Mexico council delegates hold regional planning meeting to prepare for 2019 New Mexico legislative session



PHOTO: Council Delegate Mark Freeland answering chapter officials and community members questions at a preparation meeting held at Huerfano Chapter in Huerfano, N.M. on Thursday, Jan. 17, 2019.

HUERFANO, N.M. – On Thursday, 24th Navajo Nation Council members that represent communities in the state of New Mexico held an all-day session entitled the “New Mexico Navajo Nation Chapters Preparation Meeting” to discuss issues relating to capital outlay, tribal infrastructure, aging and long-term services for Navajo elderly, and several other issues to prepare for the 2019 New Mexico legislative session.

In collaboration with council members, chapter officials, and staff, Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahí, Whiterock) coordinated the meeting with his colleagues to prepare the 54 New Mexico chapters and to provide an update on the state’s current budget and future funding availability. He stated that over 200 chapter officials and community members attended the session throughout the day.

“The state of New Mexico’s General Fund sits at \$1.1 billion dollars, the Severance Tax Bonding Capacity for FY2019 is at about \$237 million, FY2020 is at \$459 million, and the Tribal

Infrastructure Fund is at over \$14 million for FY2019 and nearly \$16 million for FY2020. There is real potential and opportunity for our 54 New Mexico chapters to help build communities, address rural development, and help enhance the quality of life for our Navajo people in these areas,” said Delegate Freeland.

He added that it is important to support the chapters at every level to promote infrastructure development and to complete the projects so it can benefit the local New Mexico Navajo communities, especially those needing basic developments such as electric lines, water lines, and bathroom additions to their homes.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé aináoz’t’l’i) thanked the chapter officials and staff for actively participating in the preparation meeting and said there are many issues that need to be addressed to ensure services for Navajo citizens.

“I appreciate the New Mexico chapter officials and staff for coming out to discuss and strategize critical community projects like power lines, water lines, and supporting our senior centers. It is important that the Navajo Nation have a strong presence with our newly elected New Mexico governor, senators, and representatives that represent our communities,” said Delegate Crotty. “It is important now more than ever to be united to speak with one voice to let our needs be known and for leadership to step up and create a streamlined process for our communities to prosper,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty said that it was important to hold state and federal leadership accountable and to keep communities apprised of how the government shutdown is affecting the Navajo Nation and federally funded services such as health care, scholarships, and senior citizens programs.

In moving forward, Delegate Freeland said council members would continue to assist and support the chapters in order to gain additional projects through four funding sources such as the Capital Outlay Fund, Tribal Infrastructure Fund, New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Care Support/Geo Bond, and the New Mexico Water Trust Board to increase resources to New Mexico Navajo communities.

Chapter officials will have the opportunity to meet with New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D) on Jan. 22 to advocate on behalf of their communities, and will be working to submit their capital outlay and infrastructure proposals that are due to the state on Feb. 11.

Also in attendance at the preparation meeting were Council Delegates Pernell Halona, Jamie Henio, Rickie Nez, Daniel E. Tso, and Wilson C. Stewart, Jr.

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