



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation Council applauds the passage of the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act

“We ask President Trump to sign the bill into law to help safeguard our youth”

WINDOW ROCK – On Thursday, the U.S. Senate passed Senate Bill 772, entitled the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act, which would amend the PROTECT Act to make Indian tribes eligible for grants from the U.S. Department of Justice to aid in implementing the AMBER Alert system, if the measure is signed into law by President Trump. The bill was named after 11-year-old Ashlynnne Mike, a young Navajo girl that was abducted and murdered on the Navajo Nation in 2016.

Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) expressed gratitude to the bill’s sponsor Sen. John McCain (R – AZ), and U.S. Rep. Andy Biggs (Dist. 5 – R) for sponsoring the House bill that was passed by the House of Representatives on Feb. 26.

“On behalf of the Navajo Nation Council, I extend my sincerest appreciation to Senator McCain and Congressman Biggs for pushing this bill forward to benefit not only the Navajo Nation, but all of Indian Country. The protection of our children is a top priority and we ask President Trump to sign the bill into law to help safeguard our youth,” said Speaker Bates.

The U.S. DOJ currently operates a pilot program that offers AMBER Alert training services to Native American tribes. The Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act would make that initiative permanent and enhance DOJ oversight over the use of grants.

The bill would also reauthorize a grant program that assists state and local governments in developing and implementing AMBER Alert communication plans that are used by law enforcement agencies to expedite child abduction alerts to the public. Under the bill, the DOJ would be required to perform a needs assessment of AMBER Alert capabilities in Indian Country.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’í), applauded the passage of the bill. As chair of the Navajo Nation Council’s Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, Delegate Crotty has strongly advocated for the implementation of the AMBER Alert system on the Navajo Nation.

“Ashlynnne Mike’s abduction exposed a weakness and I’m grateful to Pamela Foster and Gary Mike’s advocacy to increase protections for Navajo children. It has been a long-time coming for tribes to be included in this important discussion, and I am hopeful that the Navajo Nation will benefit in having access to these grants,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty added that stabilizing funding for the Navajo Nation’s current AMBER Alert system will enhance services and will provide training opportunities for Navajo Nation law enforcement and emergency management programs.

“In 2016, the Navajo community was devastated by the abduction and murder of 11-year old Ashlynnne Mike,” said Senator McCain. “In that high profile case, authorities did not issue an AMBER Alert for Ashlynnne until the day after family members reported her abduction. Tragically, thousands of young people living on Native American reservations have fallen victim to abduction. According to the FBI, more than 8,000 kids are listed as missing in Indian Country today. We cannot allow reservations to become safe havens for human traffickers and others intent on harming children. Our bipartisan bill – named for Ashlynnne Mike – will give tribes the resources they need to quickly issue AMBER Alerts, help victims escape tragedy, and save lives.”

Rep. Biggs extended his appreciation to Sen. McCain for his advocacy and those of others to get the bill through Congress.

“I’m grateful to the Senate for expediently passing the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act. I hope that President Trump will quickly sign this bill into law. Senator John McCain championed this legislation, and I’m thankful for his leadership to ensure that this lifesaving policy cleared the U.S. Congress. I sincerely hope that no parent has to see the AMBER Alert used on behalf of one of their children, but it is good to know that if it is necessary, there are now no holes in the American AMBER Alert system,” stated Congressman Biggs.

Senate Bill 772 will be sent to President Trump for consideration. The Navajo Nation Council will continue to urge President Trump to sign the bill into law.

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