



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Speaker Bates advocates for Navajo Nation priorities with House and Senate members at the Western Caucus Foundation summit



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates presents to the Western Caucus Foundation members and federal officials on Dec. 8, 2017.

LAS VEGAS, Nev. – Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) presented to the Western Caucus Foundation last Friday, on a number of issues including the ongoing process of seeking new ownership and operator(s) for the Navajo Generating Station, garnering congressional support for S. 664 the Utah Navajo Water Rights Settlement Act, completion of the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project, and leveraging funding for bulk water infrastructure projects on the Navajo Nation.

The presentation from Speaker Bates was part of the Winter Western Policy Roundtable and Public Lands Forum hosted by the Western Caucus Foundation, which is composed of U.S. House and Senate members from the democratic and republican parties that represent western and rural states that focus on four basic principles including environmental stewardship, energy, agriculture and forestry, and judicial and regulatory reform.

The two-day forum was co-chaired by U.S. Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) and U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) and included House and Senate members and officials from the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Trump Administration.

“What I am presenting to you today, represents only a portion of what the Navajo Nation Council has prioritized during our time in office. We have made progress on these issues, however, we understand that it will take the partnership and support from congressional and senate members to move some of these initiatives forward and that is my purpose of being here today,” stated Speaker Bates.

In regards to the future of Navajo Generating Station, Speaker Bates acknowledged that finding new ownership, operator(s), and securing power purchasing agreements present many challenges that must be addressed to continue operating the power plant and to preserve hundreds of Navajo jobs beyond 2019. It will take the coordination and cooperation of tribal, state, federal, and many other officials to continue NGS operations, added Speaker Bates.

“The impacts of the potential closure of NGS go far beyond the Navajo Nation. The entire state of Arizona as well as other tribes will feel the impact in terms of revenue, jobs, water delivery, and other benefits that NGS has provided for decades,” added Speaker Bates.

In January 2016, the Navajo Nation Council approved legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa), supporting the proposed Utah Navajo Water Rights Settlement. Speaker Bates requested the advocacy and support of caucus members for S. 664, which was introduced by U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and seeks congressional approval of the proposed settlement.

Speaker Bates also continued his advocacy efforts for the completion of “Block 9” of the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project that is operated by Navajo Agricultural Products Industry. He pointed out that the project is not operating and producing at full capacity due to the incomplete status of the 110,000-acre farm area, which the federal government is obligated to construct.

Rep. Gosar thanked Speaker Bates for his presentation, adding that the Navajo Nation should continue to have a seat at the table and sharing their concerns and issues with the caucus members to move the initiatives forward. Speaker Bates thanked the Western Caucus Foundation members for the invitation to present and said he will continue working and communicating closely in order to move the issues forward.

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