



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Speaker Bates advocates for balanced energy development to Congressional members

WASHINGTON D.C. – Speaker LoRenzo Bates testified on Thursday before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, to garner congressional support for the Navajo Nation’s efforts to develop a diversified energy portfolio by keeping the Navajo Generating Station in operation beyond 2019, as the Navajo Nation pursues alternative energy sources including renewable energy.

Speaker Bates was one of eight witnesses to provide testimony before the subcommittee during the oversight hearing entitled, “The Benefits of the Navajo Generating Station to Local Economies.” The subcommittee is chaired by Arizona Congressman Paul Gosar (R – Dist. 4) and consists of 23 congressional members – 13 Republicans and 10 Democrats.

“As one sovereign to another, I thank you for inviting me to testify on behalf of the Navajo Nation and the 23rd Navajo Nation Council on this very challenging issue facing our Navajo people, the future of the Navajo Generating Station – a 2,250 megawatt coal-fired power plant located on the Navajo Nation, employing hundreds of Navajo people and utilizing Navajo coal that is critical to the stability of the Navajo Nation’s economy. The Navajo Generating Station has proven to not only benefit the Navajo Nation, but it also provides many benefits for the entire State of Arizona,” stated Speaker Bates.



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates provides testimony in support of the continuation of the Navajo Generating Station beyond 2019 before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources in Washington D.C. on April, 12, 2018. (Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Washington Office)

In his testimony, Speaker Bates said the Navajo Nation is making strides toward a more diversified energy portfolio such as the development of the Kayenta Solar Facility, which broke ground in April 2016 to provide 27.5 megawatts of photovoltaic solar energy. The second phase of the project will be constructed by the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and produce over 50 megawatts of electricity, reducing the Nation's dependence on outside energy sources.

Ventures such as Kayenta solar project exemplify the Nation's willingness to transition the use of natural resources to more economically viable and environmentally friendly markets, and will require time and investments from the Nation, said Speaker Bates. During this transition, it is very important that the Navajo Generating Station remain in operation beyond 2019 to continue providing jobs, revenue, and financial stability for the Navajo Nation and the State of Arizona – this is the a more balanced approach, he added.

Speaker Bates also noted that studies indicate that the long-term continuation of NGS and Kayenta Mine have the potential of creating \$18 billion in economic benefits for the entire State of Arizona, and this includes \$5.9 billion in labor income and \$13 billion in Gross Navajo Nation Product. It is estimated that Kayenta Mine alone provides nearly \$670 million in direct and indirect economic benefits for regional economies on an annual basis.

Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown, Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Kayenta Mine workers, and members of the United Mine Workers of America, joined Speaker Bates as he delivered his testimony. The Kayenta Mine workers traveled to Capital Hill to represent the hundreds of Navajo families that would lose their income and be forced to move away from their homelands if the Navajo Generating Station and Kayenta Mine were to close in 2019.

“Throughout this past year, my colleagues and I have traveled to the Navajo Generating Station and the Kayenta Mine to hear directly from the workers and their families who would be impacted by the potential shut down of these facilities. These travels have reinforced in our mind and heart, the importance of working to keep this vital component of our Nation together. When our Navajo families have a good source of income, they are stronger, they are stronger for their children, for their extended families and for the communities they live in,” added Speaker Bates.

Acknowledging that the Navajo Nation has millions of tons of coal resources, Speaker Bates pointed out that new advanced technologies will allow the Navajo Nation to diversify the way in which coal is used to produce energy, which includes clean coal technology.

Also testifying in support of the continuation of the Navajo Generating Station and Kayenta Mine beyond 2019, included Hopi Chairman Tim Nuvangyaoma, Arizona Rep. Mark Finchem (R-Dist. 11), and local United Mine Workers of America president Marie Justice.

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