



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Speaker Bates highlights Council's progress in report on opening day of Fall Council Session



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates (left) provides his report to the Navajo Nation Council on the opening day of the Fall Council Session at the Council Chamber in Window Rock, Ariz. on Oct. 16, 2017.

WINDOW ROCK – During the opening day of the 2017 Fall Council Session, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council voted 13-0 to accept a report from Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland).

In his report to the Council, Speaker Bates highlighted the successful use of funds from the Nation's \$554 million settlement with the federal government in 2014, for major water projects that began to break ground recently.

"Many of our people have asked, 'Where did the \$554 million settlement funds go?' In late September, Diné citizens finally began to see the real results of the Navajo Nation Council's investments using the \$554 million settlement funds that the Navajo Nation received from the federal government in 2014," stated Speaker Bates.

The report referenced the “Ganado, Lower Greasewood, and Dilkon Water Improvement Project,” which is one of several major bulk water projects that was supported in January 2015, when the Council adopted legislation that approved \$180 million from the settlement dollars to be used for the water projects. Since then, the Office of the Speaker has worked diligently with the Water Management Branch, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and IHS to plan and implement the projects.

The \$9.1 million project will double the current water capacity for several communities including Ganado, Cornfields, Lower Greasewood, Dilkon, Indian Wells, Bidahochie, and Teesto, by improving current water well capacities and constructing an additional water well.

NTUA will use \$1.2 million of the settlement funds for the project through a loan agreement with the Nation, which means NTUA will eventually repay the funds to the Nation.

An additional \$4.5 million from the settlement funds was used, along with funding from the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, to construct a public safety and first responder facility near the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort. The facility will provide services to the gaming facility as well as the surrounding communities of Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii, and Dilkon.

“This project is also a sign of self-determination for the Navajo Nation and shows that we are more than capable of providing for our people and our communities,” stated Speaker Bates.

During Monday’s presentation, Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) commended Speaker Bates for the recent success of Council’s efforts to resolve issues for Navajo elderly people in the state of New Mexico who have encountered problems with obtaining driver’s licenses that comply with federal standards in accordance with the Real ID Act.

Last Friday, the Council hosted a town hall meeting in Crownpoint after several New Mexico delegates received numerous requests for help from constituents who could not obtain driver’s licenses because they either did not have a birth certificate or could not prove their residency because they either live in very rural areas or do not have a formal address.

As a result of Council meeting with New Mexico state officials in recent months, the New Mexico MVD announced that they would begin accepting a Certificate of Indian Blood and affidavits of birth in lieu of other required documents. In addition, they are also now accepting billing statements from Navajo Tribal Utility Authority as proof of residency to obtain a driver’s license.

MVD officials also announced that at least 50 people were able to obtain their driver’s license after the MVD deployed a mobile unit to the community of Crownpoint last week after consultation with members of the Council.

Other items covered in Speaker’s report include the renovation of the Council Chamber, Navajo Generating Station, Navajo Indian Irrigation Project, progress of the Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, Highway 264 road improvements, transportation priorities, and reports on the Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah state legislatures. To view the full report from Speaker Bates, please visit the Navajo Nation Council’s website at www.navajonationcouncil.org.

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