



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Speaker Bates reaffirms support for Navajo families at “Yes to NGS” rally



PHOTO: Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council LoRenzo Bates addresses Kayenta Mine and Navajo Generating workers at the Arizona State Capitol Rose Garden in Phoenix, Ariz. on Feb. 6, 2018.

PHOENIX – Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland), Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí’, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), members of the United Mine Workers of America, and state senators and representatives joined hundreds of Kayenta Mine and Navajo Generating Station workers who marched on the Arizona State Capitol on Tuesday, to officially announce the formation of the “Yes to NGS” coalition to advocate for solutions to ensure the continuation of NGS operations beyond 2019.

“It’s heartening to see so many Navajo and tribal families here to bring a powerful message to Arizona and Washington leaders. Today, we say ‘Yes to NGS!’” said Speaker Bates. “With the

creation of this coalition, we are taking another step in this challenging journey to keep Navajo families together by keeping NGS and Kayenta Mine in operation beyond 2019.”

In 2017, Speaker Bates sponsored legislation that finalized an agreement between the Nation and NGS owners to continue NGS operations and protected the jobs of hundreds of Navajo workers through the end of 2019.

Myron Richardson and Dwight Lomaintewa, who are employed at Kayenta Mine and whose families rely on the operations of both the mine and the power plant to provide for their households, joined speaker Bates.

Each of them shared the importance of keeping NGS in operation and explained that NGS and Kayenta Mine have allowed their families to remain on their traditional homelands with their extended families rather than having to away from the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribal lands to find employment. Lomaintewa also noted that the potential closure of NGS would impact the Hopi Tribe tremendously due to the fact that coal production at Kayenta Mine provides approximately 85-percent of the tribe’s annual revenue.

“Too often we equate the Navajo Generating Station with only dollars and cents. The real story is about the traditional working family and the work they do to benefit tribal people and families across Arizona,” added Speaker Bates.

Delegate Damon, who chairs the Council’s Budget and Finance Committee that is tasked with developing the Nation’s comprehensive budget each year, said he and his colleagues are doing everything possible to advocate for NGS and Kayenta Mine workers to keep their jobs at home and to provide financial stability for the Navajo Nation.

President of the United Mine Workers of America Cecil Roberts, also spoke to the workers and urged the federal government to work with the tribes to continue NGS.

“The Navajo Generating Station was developed on tribal lands by tribal workers who mine the coal and create the power that moves water to benefit families and businesses across Arizona,” said Roberts. “The path forward is for the federal government to maintain its ownership position and continue leading the transition to new owners.”

The nonprofit “Yes to NGS” coalition will be tasked with informing communities, engaging stakeholders, and advocating for solutions that would allow NGS operations to continue beyond 2019. According to the coalition, the founding members represent well over 100,000 U.S. businesses and organizations.

To learn more about the “Yes to NGS” coalition, please visit Yes to NGS.org.

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