



Speaker Damon extends gratitude to nation's doctors on National Doctors' Day, remembers VP, Dr. Taylor McKenzie

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — In the midst of the most severe global pandemic in recent history, Speaker Seth Damon of the 24th Navajo Nation Council expressed his gratitude to physicians across the Navajo Nation and the country on National Doctors' Day. The day, Mar. 30, is widely recognized in the United States as a day of appreciation and remembrance for those serving in the capacity of medical doctor.

"In our time of greatest need, I wish to take a moment, on behalf of the Navajo Nation, to extend a sincere gesture of gratitude to the medical professionals that are guiding our nation's future right now. To our medical students, recent graduates, and seasoned doctors, the Navajo Nation thanks you and stands behind you at this most critical moment," said Speaker Damon.

National Doctors' Day was formally adopted by the United States Government for the first time on Mar. 30, 1991 through Senate Joint Resolution 366. S.J.Res.366 stated, "...society owes a debt of gratitude to physicians for the contributions of physicians in enlarging the reservoir of scientific knowledge, increasing the number of scientific tools, and expanding the ability of health professional to use the knowledge and tools effectively in the never-ending fight against disease..."

Speaker Damon added that the Navajo Nation has long been honored to receive both physicians from abroad and from the Navajo homeland. He said, "On this day, we also remember the late Vice President Dr. Taylor McKenzie, who was the first Navajo to become a medical doctor. The late Honorable McKenzie wielded an extensive depth of scientific thought and true experience to bring esteem to the office." He served more than 30 years as the Navajo Nation's first surgeon and Chief Medical Officer prior to his term in office.

The late Dr. McKenzie, who graduated from Wheaton College and the Baylor University College of Medicine, inspired many Navajos who now serve in the medical field. His work is widely regarded as foundational to both the Navajo Nation's own medical system and to tribal health education programs across the country.

"Whether it is the legacy of one or the legacy of many, we take this moment to recognize the physicians serving the Navajo People and in any medical facility currently working to protect the health of our nation. Though we look back now, we will continue to look ahead to a future where our people thrive in health, wellbeing and in *k'é*. To our doctors, we say *ahéhee*," said Speaker Damon.

The Navajo health care system is comprised of more than 13 tribally-controlled and Indian Health Service facilities located within and around the Navajo Nation. The need for Navajo medical doctors persists as the Navajo Nation seeks to continuously improve its health care system and patient outcomes.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council is the legislative body of the Navajo Nation government and is comprised of 24 delegates elected from 110 local communities, called chapters.

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