



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 7, 2020

**24th Navajo Nation Council
attend opening day of Utah Legislature**



PHOTO: Ms. Anna Boynton, Utah Department of Public Safety tribal liaison, speaking to Delegates Mark Freeland and Nathaniel Brown at the opening day of the Utah Legislature on Feb. 6, 2020. James Toledo from the Utah Indian Affairs office looks on.

SALT LAKE CITY — Members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council attended the opening day of the Utah Legislature Feb. 6 to advocate on behalf of projects for the Utah portion of the Navajo Nation. Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown and Council Delegate Mark Freeland traveled to the state capitol to share the Navajo Nation Utah priority listing.

They were joined by representatives from the Navajo Utah Commission, Office of Legislative Services, and Office of the Speaker. The newly-appointed director of the Utah Division of Indian Affairs, Dustin Jensen, was introduced and will begin his new position soon.

Council Delegate Nate Brown spoke about the Diné Bizaad Subcommittee and the effort to revitalize the teaching of Navajo language at schools and through programs on the Navajo Nation. Rep. Christine Watkins spoke about the Montezuma Creek bilingual program. She noted that funding for bilingual education programs were cut recently and that a meeting with the school superintendents on the bilingual programs would be scheduled. Council Delegate Brown also spoke about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Men campaign that continues to grow as families come forward on the plight of loved ones.

Justin Lee, director of the Utah State Elections Office, spoke about a recent meeting with Leonard Gorman, executive director of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission regarding a request to work with the San Juan County Clerk. The concerns came from Navajo chapters that had issue with the county's efforts to study increasing the San Juan County Commission through Proposition 10, which failed. Lee said his office doesn't have the authority to remove a clerk and that such action would take legislative change. Council Delegate Brown informed Lee that he would return in the month with Chief Legislative Counsel Dana Bobroff to discuss the issue in-depth.

H.B. 43, aimed at recruitment and retention of teachers in the Montezuma Creek and Monument Valley communities, was brought forward for discussion by Dr. Chuck Foster. Current teachers stay for a maximum of two years before moving on. Dr. Foster is advocating for an increase in teacher salaries. A memorandum of understanding was executed to provide Navajo language classes at Jordan High School. The classes are free and includes an Anglo and Hispanic student. "As chairman of the Diné Bizaad Subcommittee, we would like to meet with Dr. Foster and support his efforts," Council Delegate Brown said.

In Aug. 2019, the language symposium showcased five of the eight Utah tribes. The presenters showed their work with state school districts on incorporating Native American language classes into the curriculum. The group also spoke about professional development opportunities for tribal teachers. Dr. Foster said \$188,000 in funding was available and had to expended by June 2020.

The Westwater Community Project was also discussed. The power line and waterline project are budgeted at \$400,000 for 2020. Larry Echohawk, special advisor to Gov. Herbert on tribal affairs, said collaboration with the LDS Church is also moving forward for humanitarian donations for the water hookup. Utah is requesting a resolution of support from the Navajo Utah Trust Fund for the project. NTUA is constructing a line from the south for connection into Westwater. House Joint Resolution 10, legislation against Native American mascots in Utah, was also covered.

The Office of the Speaker and 24th Navajo Nation Council will continue working with the Utah Legislature to improve the quality of life for Navajos living in the Utah portion of the Navajo Nation.



PHOTO: Larry Echohawk, Indian affairs advisor to Governor Herbert, speaking to the Navajo Nation's delegation at the opening day of the Utah Legislature.

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