



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2016

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Navajo Nation Council welcomes U.S. Senator Tom Udall to the Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK – On the third day of the 2016 Spring Council Session, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council welcomed U.S. Sen. Tom Udall (D – N.M.) to the Navajo Nation Council Chamber to provide an informal report regarding congressional bills and initiatives that may impact the Navajo Nation.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates thanked Sen. Udall on behalf of the Council for visiting the Navajo Nation. In June, the Council sent a formal invitation to Sen. Udall

to provide a report during the Summer Session, as part of the Council's overall efforts to build stronger partnerships with state and federal leaders.

In his report to Council, Sen. Udall highlighted several congressional bills including a bill he sponsored to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, to require the federal government to test all new chemicals manufactured each year before they go on the market. The new law which was passed by Congress and signed into law, will also require the testing of 85,000 existing chemicals on the market to help protect against cancer, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, birth defects, and other health conditions that may be caused by dangerous chemicals.

"Some have called this the most important environmental law to pass Congress in decades because it fixes a broken 40-year-old law and because it will have widespread impact in industry, our communities and on the Navajo Nation," said Sen. Udall. "Our new chemical safety law will finally protect the people on the Navajo Nation, and across the country."

Sen. Udall also highlighted the passage of the Senate of the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2015, intended to give the Navajo Nation more control over the development of its resources and to create jobs and economic development. The bill was added to a broader energy bill that Sen. Udall is working to pass through Congress this year.



PHOTO: U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D–N.M.) provides a report to the 23rd Navajo Nation Council during the 2016 Summer Council Session in the Council Chamber in Window Rock on July 20, 2016.

Council Delegates Walter Phelps, Otto Tso, Dwight Witherspoon, and Raymond Smith, Jr., who each serve on the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission, requested the support of Sen. Udall to provide federal funding for rehabilitation efforts for the Former Bennett Freeze Area.

Delegate Phelps asked Sen. Udall to consider introducing a senate bill similar to H.R. 3911, a house bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D – AZ) that seeks the approval of technical amendments to the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act to waive certain federal regulations to expedite development and rehabilitation efforts within the FBFA.

“We need your assistance to get a senate bill introduced,” stated Delegate Phelps. “These amendments we’re asking for are very critical.”

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty requested the support of Sen. Udall for a congressional bill seeking to amend the Indian Tribal Justice Act, to rename the office supporting tribal justice systems and courts to the Office of Tribal Justice System Support and Victim Services and to expand the purpose of the office to include providing services to crime victims.

The bill would also require the office to provide grants to tribes for crime victim compensation programs and services for crime victims including: domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and child advocacy centers, relocation and transitional housing, medical care; and legal services.

Sen. Udall also touched on the Gold King Mine spill that occurred in August of 2015, which impacted several Navajo communities when contaminants were released into the San Juan River in New Mexico due to the spill that occurred in the state of Colorado.

In response to the spill, Sen. Udall introduced the Gold King Mine Spill Recovery Act of 2015, which would require the federal EPA to compensate those who were impacted by the spill and also require the agency to work with the states and the Navajo Nation to fund and implement long-term water quality monitoring.

“The EPA has so far made \$2 million dollars available for long-term monitoring, but that is not nearly enough. I'm also very disappointed at how long it has taken the EPA to process reimbursements. People impacted by the accident must be made whole. It has been almost a year and that is way too long,” Sen. Udall stated.

Council members also thanked the Senator for his support of the Bears Ears national monument proposal and for his support of the Safeguard Tribal Objects of Patrimony Act, introduced by U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich (D – N.M.), which seeks to prohibit the exporting and sale of Native American sacred and cultural items.

Sen. Udall is currently serving his second term as a member of the U.S. Senate, representing several Navajo communities in the state of New Mexico.

To view the full report from Sen. Udall, please visit:

http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/pressReleases/2016/Jul/20JUL2016_Udall_NNC_Speech.pdf

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