



## Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. Meets with U.S. Senator Kelly and Other Congressional Delegations in Washington D.C.

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**WASHINGTON, D.C. —** Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain) traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with U.S. Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and other congressional delegates to discuss funding requests for various Navajo Nation community projects.

“The continuation of advocacy is much needed at D.C. to continue educating and informing all issues on the Navajo Nation to our Federal Leadership. Road construction, Uranium (Claim 28/Field Hearing), Farming Development, and Post Office establishment were addressed to our Navajo Delegation in DC,” said Delegate Begay.

During his trip, Delegate Begay met with Congressman Tom O’Halloran (D-AZ-01) and U.S. Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ), as well as meeting staff members representing the Offices of Representatives U.S. Representative Raul Grijalva (D-AZ-03), Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee; Teresa Leger Fernandez (D-NM-03), Chair of the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States; Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs; and the Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tribal Affairs for the US Department of Transportation to discuss issues that affect the Central Agency and the surrounding communities.

Included in this expedited visit, Delegate Begay also visited the Navajo Nation Washington Office (NNWO), which made him the first visiting Navajo leader since the start of the pandemic, to follow-up on collaborative issues on Capitol Hill.

Amongst the topics being discussed, Delegate Begay sat down with U.S. leaders to prioritize infrastructure on the Navajo Nation, along with leading efforts to secure funds to pave Hopi Route 60 (H60) and to remove silt for both Navajo and Hopi communities with Hopi Vice Chairman, Clark Tenakhongva.

“The development and maintenance of routes such as this, plays an important role in the economic development of a country and are often used as an index to assess the extent of its development,” wrote Tenakhongva in his letter to Sen. Kelly.

H60 is a 13.7-mile road that serves as a critical transportation corridor which connects many rural communities to Arizona State Highway 264, between the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe.

Most often this vital dirt road has provided a byway to school buses, public safety officers, and/or emergency response vehicles.

However, due to the seasonal conditions, the road is often washed out and at times — become impassable when it rains or snows. Leaving Navajo and Hopi residents unable to travel for necessities and services.

In his letter to the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Darryl Lacounte, Sen. Kelly stated his support for Delegate Begay's request for increased BIA funding to pave H60.

"The Navajo Nation and the Hopi Tribe have long advocated for increased BIA funding to pave a 13-mile stretch of H60 that links the community of Low Mountain, Arizona on the Navajo Nation and the community of Polacca, Arizona, on the Hopi Reservation," wrote Sen. Kelly.

Completion of H60 would provide a safe, dependable and much-needed road access to communities on both the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Tribe. This road improvement will enhance safety, community, and economic development for the region.

While visiting the Capitol, Delegate Begay advocated for increased funding for Highway 191 from Chinle to Many Farms as it is in need of substantial safety upgrades, including signage and rumble strips that could decrease accidents and save lives.

To support advocacy efforts, Sen. Kelly reached out to the U.S. Post Service in regards to Delegate Begay's request for a permanent U.S. Post Office to be built in Many Farms, AZ.

Delegate Begay reiterated the need to fully build out infrastructure on the Navajo Nation, including getting electricity and running water to Navajo communities. Emphasizing the need for Congressional delegation to support irrigation projects in Many Farms, AZ.

Although it was a short but productive visit, Delegate Begay pushed for support to clean up uranium mines on the Navajo Nation such as the Claim #28 Blue Gap/Tachee uranium site.

Calling for more awareness around uranium issues including the need to hold a Field Hearing on the Navajo Nation, stressing the importance of renewing Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), and managing federal dollars made available to the Navajo Nation.

"I have spoken directly with Sen. Kelly and Congressman O'Halleran on these key issues and although there are many other issues to address, we have to focus on certain issues during this trip," said Delegate Begay. "I appreciate the NNWO and the Office of the Speaker's staff for coordinating this meeting."

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