



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Navajo Nation Council hosts meeting with United States Justice Department and Federal Partners to fund Prosecutors Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 22, 2021

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain) organized a partnership meeting with several federal agencies to seek a solution to allocating additional funding for key prosecutor positions from the U.S. Department of Justice and Interior Department to the Navajo Nation.

The criminal cases on the Navajo Nation continue to increase, with most cases declined at the federal level by the U.S. Attorney's Office. Access to federal funding sources will support several prosecutor positions at each Navajo agency and ensure criminal cases are resolved on time.

"The Navajo Nation Council supports our prosecutors and public defenders and this is the first step in addressing the shortfalls impacting our justice system," said Delegate Begay. "This will be a solution to a growing problem of underfunded justice systems across Indian Country and by coming together we will support those families most in need."

Multiple options to secure long term federal funding were discussed. In attendance were representatives from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Tribal-Interior Budget Council (TIBC), and Navajo Nation officials from the Speaker's Office, Office of the Prosecutor, Department of Justice, Office of Legislative Counsel, the Washington Office, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Office of the President and Vice President.

"The Navajo Nation has a bigger need for prosecutors and the American Rescue Plan Act gives us time to reboot," said TIBC Co-Chair Ron Allen. "All of our Tribal Nations lack the resources to provide support for our courts and law enforcement officers. The Justice Department has money to aid tribal justice programs during this pandemic."

Some short-term solutions included the utilization of American Rescue Plan Act funds and sources from the U.S. Department of Justice. Other options include an allocation from the Unreserved, Undesignated Funds Balance (UUFB) to the Navajo Nation Prosecutor's Office but would need additional support from the OMB and the Office of the Controller.

"We are taking the necessary steps to fund the Prosecutor's Office as we work with our federal partners to meet any future shortfalls," said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháá'í, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Łichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). "This action is for the victims and their families that crime has impacted. They deserve justice under Navajo Law in which our distinguished courts and prosecutors provide."

Gregory Mehojah, Navajo Regional BIA Director, assisted Delegate Begay in his request for funding through a proposed cooperative agreement. With approval from Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, the agreement would be for five years and the OMB must meet certain requirements before the requested prosecutor's positions are funded. Additional partnership meetings are planned next month.

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