



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Navajo Nation welcomes Arizona Senator Mark Kelly

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PHOTO: Speaker Seth Damon welcomes Arizona Senator Mark Kelly to the Navajo Nation Council Chambers.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Earlier today, Arizona Senator Mark Kelly was welcomed by Speaker Seth Damon and members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council to the capital of the largest Sovereign Nation in the United States. The senator toured the Council Chambers and responded to questions from delegates.

The leadership meeting included topics covering Arizona redistricting plans, public safety issues, the protection of the Chaco Canyon National Historic Park, and the Build Back Better Act being negotiated by Congress.

“Thank you for inviting me to the Navajo Nation and into these sacred chambers,” said Senator Mark Kelly (Arizona). “The recent infrastructure bill passed by Congress will be signed into law by President Biden. This act includes funds for tribal water rights settlements and a large allocation for water projects across Indian Country. We have been focused in the Senate on projects that will rebuild our country and lift up all Americans, which includes our Tribal Nations.”

Senator Mark Kelly is a retired U.S. Navy combat pilot, engineer, and NASA astronaut. A Tucson resident, his wife is former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords. In October, Law & Order Chairwoman

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Eugenia Charles-Newton met with the senator in his Washington office to advocate for judicial and public safety issues

“Senator Kelly, you are a friend of the Navajo people and we welcome you to the largest Indigenous Nation in the United States,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh). “Our people appreciate your advocacy for our veterans, our elders, and all families across the Navajo Nation during this pandemic. You supported this bipartisan infrastructure bill that sends a clear message to Sovereign Nations around the country that we are a top priority.”

President Joe Biden plans to sign the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act this week. The new law will be the largest investment in Tribal Nation infrastructure projects to include:

- \$3.5 billion for the Indian Health Service (IHS) sanitation facilities construction
- \$3 billion for the U.S. Department of Transportation tribal transportation program
- \$2.5 billion to address Indian water rights settlements previously approved
- \$2 billion for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration for the tribal broadband connectivity program to expand broadband access

“Senator Kelly, the creation of good paying jobs is important to the Navajo people as the country overcomes this pandemic,” said Vice Chair Raymond Smith, Jr. (Klagetoh, Wide Ruins, Houck, Lupton, Nahat’á Dziil). “People are hurting from rising gas prices and they are trying to feed their families - our veterans are most affected. The federal government must understand our local issues and work with us to solve problems like delapidating bridges and roads, the lack of clean water access, and bringing electricity into homes.”

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will bring over \$11 billion into the 570+ Tribal Nations in the country for new infrastructure projects to begin immediate construction for broadband internet lines, roadways, bridges, and water pipelines.

“The Bennett Freeze region was impacted significantly because of federal policies and our families residing there are still suffering today,” said Delegate Otto Tso (Tónaneesdizi). “Even after 40 years, our people are living in wood sheds with no running water or electricity in the western part of the Navajo Nation. We need to rebuild Indian Country and our hope is we are not left behind.”

The infrastructure bill will deliver \$550 billion in new federal investments across the country in the span of five years for bridges, roads, broadband connections, water, and new energy systems.

“President Biden and Congress must understand that this country cannot build anything without water,” said Delegate Paul Begay (Coppermine, K’ai’bii’tó, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake, Bodaway/Gap). “Our water is a sacred life source that is at the foundation of any future development. We survive because of water and it is our belief that even businesses cannot be created without water. Now is the time we need to address future water shortages.”

Council Delegate Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kinłichii’, Steamboat) invited Senator Kelly to visit veterans and elders around northern Arizona; “It is evident that the Navajo Nation lacks adequate law enforcement in responding to our public safety concerns. Many of the

homes of our elders have collapsing roofs and have outhouses as their bathrooms. We have to work together to change this narrative.”

Senator Kelly is the son of two police officers and attended the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and Naval Postgraduate School. As a naval aviator he made two deployments to the First Gulf War and flew 39 combat missions in Operation Desert Storm.

“The United States is your partner as we maintain and strengthen the government to government relationship between our nations,” said Senator Mark Kelly (Arizona). “We understand that the Navajo Nation was hit hard by this pandemic. In the American Rescue Plan, we worked to get the Navajo Nation and our tribal communities the resources they needed to recover. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is the largest investment into Indian Country and shovel ready projects need to begin. You have my commitment to continue fighting for investments that will strengthen the health and well-being of our tribal communities.”

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