



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Bridging the Internet Gap a priority for the Navajo Nation Council

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PHOTO: Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. speaking at a work session held at Twin Arrows, Ariz. to discuss the Navajo Nation Fiscal Recovery Funds.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. of the 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate hosts fourth work session with Bureau of Indian Affairs Regional Director Gregory Mehojah, the Navajo Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, and Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico county officials to develop a comprehensive plan on bridging the broadband internet gap on the Navajo Nation.

The meeting was held at the Chinle Unified School District that included attendance from multiple telecommunication entities like AT&T, Frontier Communications, CellularOne, Sacred Wind, Arcadian Infracom, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and the Arizona Commerce Authority.

“Working in collaboration, the goal of the working group is to create a spending plan on the effective use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to construct cell phone towers in rural areas, expanding broadband fiber optic lines, and lowering mobile phone data prices for the Navajo consumer. The Navajo Nation Council is working with the Executive Branch to responsibly allocate millions of federal dollars into broadband infrastructure projects. We applaud the work of County Supervisor Lena Fowler for her leadership in addressing the technological challenges for the rural areas of the Navajo Nation,” said Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain).

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Coconino County Supervisor Lena Fowler (D-5) represents areas covering Tuba City, Ariz., and other western Navajo communities. Working with Delegate Begay, she is bringing Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah county leaders to the table to solve major broadband problems affecting school districts, chapter houses, and small businesses.

“The main goal is to invest in hundreds of new miles of broadband fiber optic lines across the Navajo Nation and to build more cell phone towers for remote areas. We are in a position to bring everyone to the table to improve internet and cell carrier service for our Navajo families. Major cell carriers such as T-Mobile, AT&T, Verizon, Sacred Wind, NTUA Wireless, and CellularOne have an obligation to provide our communities quality service. There is over \$208 million in new ARPA funds for internet broadband connections and \$200 million for power line projects. The Navajo Nation Council is committed to rebuilding and expanding our broadband infrastructure so that all chapters have access to high-speed internet service next year,” added Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

The working group has created a plan suggesting the following solutions:

- ARPA funds need to be utilized to extend broadband and cell service in the most remote areas of the Navajo Nation where there is limited or no service.
- ARPA funds must be used to expand broadband services, not just for upgrades.
- FirstNet needs to be established for Navajo first responders with a reliable, high-speed, nationwide wireless broadband network.
- The construction of a 9-1-1 Emergency Call Center for public safety officials.
- All cell carriers must be at the table to expand the Navajo broadband network.

“The Navajo Nation Council appreciates the assistance of Frontier Communications as we work on improving land-line phone services which includes faster internet service for Navajo households and our chapter houses. All cell carriers and telecommunication entities that do business with Navajo consumers are welcome to join our working group to solve these issues during this pandemic. It is my goal that all service providers have equal access to federal funding and we diversify the type of service choices available to the Navajo people,” added Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr.

The Broadband Working Group has a meeting with the Arizona Commerce Authority scheduled in Phoenix, Ariz., this January.

Last week, the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee of the 24th Navajo Nation Council met with the Executive Branch to discuss Legislation No. 0257-21 to allocate \$1,166,003,000 billion of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for construction of new water and electric lines, broadband internet connections, and road infrastructure projects for the Navajo people.

The Navajo Nation Fiscal Recovery Fund Office has created a website to share all ARPA updates with the public: www.NavajoNationARPA.org