



Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. advocates for completion of FirstNet Network coverage

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PHOTO: Hon. Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. at the Navajo Nation Council Chambers in Window Rock, Ariz.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Last week, Hon. Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain) of the 24th Navajo Nation Council met with AT&T representatives and several entities to review the progress FirstNet network has completed in boosting wireless communications for Navajo Nation first responders.

“In my position as a council delegate on the Resources & Development Committee, I’ll continue to advocate for these and other critical emergency services to be implemented as soon as possible,” said Delegate Begay.

In March of 2020, the 24th Navajo Nation Council passed Resolution CMA-12-20 approving expedited process for FirstNet and other critical wireless public safety communications to assist Navajo Nation operations undertaken during the start and time of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

To expand FirstNet coverage, Commnet Broadband, Choice NTUA Wireless, Cellular One, and the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission are collaborating to help build new cell sites to help build more than 100 new cell sites.

Currently, most towers are operational to improve wireless communications with the exception of two which have yet to be completed due to the lack of 164 process approvals from the Navajo

Land Department.

In order to streamline the land withdrawal process, the Resources & Development Committee passed RDCS-21-22 approving the delegation of authority to the department manager of the Navajo Land Department to grant rights-of-way on Navajo Nation Trust lands and fee lands.

Additionally, RDCS-23-22 was passed approving the plan of operation for the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources General Land Development One-Stop Shop to be the regulatory review for Navajo Nation Federal Recovery Fund funded projects.

During the meeting, Delegate Begay questioned why no temporary administrative waiver could be utilized by Navajo Leadership to expedite the process approvals in order to immediately aid Navajo Nation first responders in emergency situations. Additional comments criticized Navajo leadership for not taking quick enough action after a public health state of emergency was issued in March.

“Through the expansion of FirstNet coverage, our Navajo Nation first responders can be equipped with secure and high-speed connectivity while carrying out daily activities and emergencies for our communities,” said Hon. Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh). “Our priority lies in getting these land approvals through the Navajo Land Department in order to cover rural communities and chapters in the case of an emergency to save lives.”

Built with AT&T in a public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority, FirstNet is the only nationwide platform dedicated to providing American first responders high-speed broadband communications that in turn will improve public safety in communities.

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