



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council Delegates Advocate for Mandatory Federal Aid and Public Safety Measures during White House Meeting



PHOTO: Navajo Nation Speaker Crystalyne Curley and members of the Law and Order Standing Committee met with Elizabeth Hidalgo Reese, Senior Policy Advisor for Native Affairs for the White House Domestic Policy Council, to discuss issues facing large tribes.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Navajo Nation Speaker Crystalyne Curley, Chairwoman Eugenia Charles-Newton, Council Delegate Nathan Notah, and tribal leaders of the Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT), met with Elizabeth Hidalgo Reese, the Senior Policy Advisor for Native Affairs for the White House Domestic Policy Council, on Thursday, Sept. 21, in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues facing large tribes such as public safety, the potential government shutdown, education, and Indian Health Services (IHS).

During the meeting, Chairwoman Charles-Newton, who Chairs the Law and Order Committee, advocated to make federal funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) mandatory spending.

“We understand that the potential for a federal government shutdown may occur if Congress doesn’t come to an agreement in the coming days. Many of the funds tied to discretionary funding given to tribes fund social service programs. If mandatory funding was in place for the BIA and BIE, it would help to ensure these programs that help tribes would not be impacted

by any federal shutdown, and our communities would continue to receive the assistance they need," said Chair Charles-Newton.

In addition, Charles-Newton offered a comprehensive document detailing public safety and law enforcement statistics. The report illustrates that, despite a 27,000 square mile land base and an estimated 200,000 Navajo residents living on the Navajo Nation, there are only 214 Navajo police officers and 34 criminal investigators, a level that falls significantly short of the national average of 2.6 officers per 1,000 individuals.

In her remarks, Chairwoman Charles-Newton also made a case to create a budget line for School Resource Officers with the BIE budget. These officers would be responsible for safeguarding students and teachers, and to curb school violence. She highlighted the police response times, a consequence of the scarcity of law enforcement officers, as a reason for employing officers to keep Navajo children safe.

Speaker Curley underscored the need for forward-thinking appropriations, akin to those received by the IHS from Congress the previous year. Such policies would ensure that, even in the event of a federal government shutdown, IHS funding would remain unaffected, allowing critical services to persist unabated for tribal communities.

"We are very thankful to the White House for meeting with our Nation's leaders and providing a path forward for future discussions. We are optimistic that working with our federal partners will result in solutions and improvements that ultimately benefit our Navajo people," said Speaker Curley.

COLT serves as a vocal advocacy group, shedding light on issues experienced by American Indian tribes with extensive land bases exceeding 100,000 acres.

Reese was appointed by the Biden-Harris Administration in April 2023, and is tasked with liaising with tribal nations throughout the United States.

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