



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Council Delegates meet with Arizona State Legislators on Indian Nations and Tribal Legislative Day**



**PHOTO: (L to R) Council Delegate Vince R. James, Speaker Crystalyne Curley, Senate President Warren Petersen, Council Delegate Carl R. Slater, Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton, and Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez.**

**PHOENIX, Ariz.** – During the 31st Anniversary Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day, members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council met with Arizona state legislators at the Arizona State Capitol to advance Navajo Nation priorities.

“We’re here advocating for solutions to issues that create equity gaps across the Navajo Nation, including voting rights, funding for educational programs, public safety, and water rights,” said Speaker Crystalyne Curley. “The Navajo Nation contributes significantly to the state through taxation, and we want to see a greater return of those funds invested directly back into our communities.”

Speaker Curley was joined by Council Delegates Carl R. Slater, Arbin Mitchell, Shaandiin Parrish, Dr. Andy Nez, Casey Allen Johnson, Helena Nez Begay, Eugenia Charles-Newton, and Vince R. James. The delegation met with various state leaders.

The delegates called for support of Navajo Nation priorities identified by the Arizona State Caucus Committee of the 25th Navajo Nation Council. These priorities include education, infrastructure, tax parity, and public safety.

During a meeting with Representative David Marshall, Law and Order Committee Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton presented raw data underscoring critical public safety needs across the Navajo Nation, including the urgent need for additional police substations.

"Increased police presence and visibility reduce crime," Chair Charles-Newton said. "Currently, the Navajo Nation Police Department has 220 officers patrolling approximately 27,000 square miles. To meet the national average, the Nation would need 560 officers. These substations will function as holding facilities and living quarters, significantly reducing response times in rural areas and improving the efficiency of inmate transfers."

Speaker Curley highlighted the need for a public safety substation in the community of Tselani/Cottonwood, while Council Delegate Vince James emphasized the budgetary necessity of keeping the Ganado Fire Department operational.

"The Ganado Fire Department serves four chapters and provides extended service to 14 surrounding communities," James said. "It needs to stay in operation."

In meetings with House Minority Leader Oscar De Los Santos, delegates sought support for Navajo-related funding bills aimed at establishing rehabilitation centers, constructing nursing homes, supporting public safety facilities such as police substations, improving roads and maintenance yards, and advancing broadband equity.

Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez discussed Navajo education priorities with Senate President Warren Petersen, including the lack of tribal representation and initiatives being addressed by the Arizona State Board of Education. These concerns relate to the White House Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and the need for accountability within the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) program.

"Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Horne, stated that tribes are exempt from any implementation of DEI measures, but we are not seeing consistency when high-level decisions are made that impact the Nation," Dr. Nez said. "We need documentation to support that statement. The Navajo Nation has 11 school districts in Arizona, with much more surrounding the Nation, including those in the valley. Any federal cuts to Title programs or services will have a significant impact on our students and schools."

Dr. Nez also called for an expanded, hybrid approach to the ESA voucher program to better meet the needs of Navajo students, especially our students with disabilities. "I am open to working with Representative Andy Biggs on a Bill, which can be strengthened by your support," he said.

Council Delegate Carl R. Slater met with Senator David Farnsworth to address challenges faced by non-Navajo business owners operating on the Navajo Nation, including the burden of multiple layers of taxation at the tribal, state, and federal levels.

Slater urged Farnsworth to support forthcoming legislation by Representative Myron Tsosie to address dual taxation. The proposal would reform the Transaction Privilege Tax to include revenue sharing with the Navajo Nation and establish tax credits or exemptions for businesses operating on the Nation.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council extends its appreciation to the Inter Tribal Association of Arizona, Governor Katie Hobbs' Office of Tribal Relations, and the Arizona state legislators who took the time to engage with Council Delegates and listen to the concerns of the Navajo Nation.

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