



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 27, 2026

Navajo Nation Council opens 2026 Winter Session with recognitions and public awareness events



The 25th Navajo Nation Council opened the 2026 Winter Session with recognitions and public awareness presentations.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Monday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council convened to open the 2026 Winter Session, welcoming visiting guests and officials to the 'People's House' as the Council Delegates prepared for the week's agenda of proposed legislation.

Prior to the opening of the session, the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force hosted a presentation to raise awareness about human trafficking prevention. During the presentation, Patrick Gallegos of the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women reviewed the Four "P's" of Prevention: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership.

"Human trafficking impacts families across the Navajo Nation and throughout tribal communities," said MMDR Task Force Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty. "Reducing its impact requires educating our communities about prevention strategies that help identify red flags and behavioral indicators. Education is key to prevention."

The Navajo Nation Department of Health and the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Program hosted an awareness walk to recognize the critical responsibility of public health workers. Council Delegate Shaandiin Parrish was joined by Navajo Nation Department of Health Acting Director Sherylene Yazzie and Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Program Manager Radeanna Combs.

"We are promoting awareness of the critical role that our public health workers fulfill every day," said Budget and Finance Committee Chair Shaandiin Parrish. "In Kayenta, we have the only 638-funded public nursing program on the Nation. The Nation's only registered public health nurse from Kayenta, Ruth White, just retired. We encourage young people to take these public health positions."

Chinle High School's Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) presented the colors, and Miss Jeehdeez'a Elementary School student Hailey Begay led the Pledge of Allegiance. The National Anthem was performed by Miss White Mountain Apache Queen Priya Simpson.

The invocation was delivered by former 23rd Navajo Nation Council Delegate Leonard Pete of Chinle, who called for unity among Navajo leadership to guide the Nation forward in a positive direction.

Joining the Council on opening day were special guests and officials, including students from the University of New Mexico; Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and Vice President Richelle Montoya; Senior Field Representative Brian Lee from U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Luján's office; Tribal Engagement Director Luther Lee from U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly's office; and Coconino County Supervisor Lena Fowler.

Council Delegates recognized the efforts of outstanding individuals and fallen leaders. Resources and Development Committee Chair Brenda Jesus honored two fallen veterans from the Oak Springs and Pine Springs Chapters, Anderson Six and Clayton Curley. Chair Jesus also recognized the late Arik Henry, former Gallup High School football coach.

Council Delegates Helena Nez Begay and Amber Kanazbah Crotty gave special recognition to the life of Maleeka "Mollie" Boone, who was remembered as friendly and courteous, and known for wearing her cowboy hat and boots.

"The family has asked leadership to strengthen Navajo Nation law and has requested to meet with the Council," said Chair Crotty. "We will invite them to return to share their experience and discuss how we can improve response times."

Chair Crotty also recognized Vangie Randall Shorty, the mother of Zachariah Shorty, who also called on all tribal leaders to strengthen laws addressing violence against children who are abused, go missing, and are found in tragic circumstances.

Budget and Finance Committee Chair Shaandiin Parrish also recognized the Kayenta Police Department, Kayenta District Prosecutor's Office, Kayenta Township Fire Department, and emergency medical technicians for their response to a drunk driving accident that occurred during the 2025 Kayenta Light Parade.

Before adoption of the agenda, Speaker Crystalyne Curley called for a moment of silence in honor of Maleeka 'Mollie' Boone, Carson Apodaka, Veterans Anderson Six and Clayton Curley, and Gallup High School football coach Arik Henry.

"It is our shared responsibility to raise awareness in our communities and to honor the lives of those who brought positive change to the Navajo Nation," said Speaker Curley.

Following the recognitions, the Council approved the agenda for the 2026 Winter Session.

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