



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2026

Delegate Johnson applauds Navajo Pine students' innovation at science fair



Council Delegate Casey Allen Johnson served as a judge during a science fair held at Navajo Pine High School.

NAVAJO, N.M. –Council Delegate Casey Allen Johnson recently demonstrated his support for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education by serving as a judge at a science fair competition held at Navajo Pine High School, a School of Technology under Gallup-McKinley County Schools, on February 11.

“Our Navajo students are so brilliant in their ideas,” Delegate Johnson said. “Seeing our students think outside the box and explore topics that interest them tells me they care about the Navajo Nation. Whether they realize it or not, they are finding solutions that help advance our Navajo science community, and I congratulate all participants.”

The science fair marked the first time in several years that Navajo Pine High School hosted the event, which also provided students with an opportunity to learn how the scientific method applies to their daily lives, according to science teacher Kim Etsitty.

“Science fairs are especially important for our Indigenous students because they show that Indigenous science is real science and deserves recognition,” Etsitty said. “They also create opportunities for students to see themselves as scientists, engineers, and researchers. At the high school level, these projects can open doors to STEM programs, internships, and stronger college applications.”

With approximately 18 poster boards on display, student projects covered computer science, chemistry, environmental science, biology, engineering, and social science. Topics included the exploration of fruit conductors, soil pH levels in the Navajo Nation, and the antibacterial use of rabbitbrush as a natural disinfectant.

To support hands-on learning, Etsitty invited Delegate Johnson to participate as a judge and welcomed Native scientists from the Navajo Natural Heritage Program, who represent a variety of scientific disciplines. The program works to restore riparian habitats in creeks within the Chooshgai Mountains, operates a seed lab at the Navajo Nation Zoo, and supports dormant agricultural efforts at North Leupp Family Farms.

Delegate Johnson also applauded the efforts of the emerging scientists who will participate in an all-expenses-paid trip to the National American Invitational Science and Engineering Fair (NAISEF), the largest national STEM competition and learning experience for Indigenous students. The trip to NAISEF in Oklahoma City, Okla., is pending approval from Gallup-McKinley County Schools, Etsitty said.

“This opportunity for our students affirms access to Native knowledge systems and encourages research grounded in Diné values,” Delegate Johnson added. “Participation in NAISEF supports sustained engagement in STEM pathways and provides students with opportunities to present and share their data with peers.”

Delegate Johnson congratulated the overall science fair winners, recognizing Hailey Yazzie and McKayla Tsošie for their first-place environmental science project, “Matchstick Forest,” and Leila Tsabetsaye, Ava Tsošie, and Alexia Kisehm for earning second place in environmental science with their project, “What Absorbents Clean Oil Spills the Best.” He also commended Abel Arthur and Jakobe Rodriguez for receiving first place in computer science for their project, “Weights and Robots.”

###