



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Law and Order Committee advocates for Navajo public safety, education and food security in Washington, D.C.



Left to Right: Council Delegates Arbin Mitchell, Eugenia Charles-Newton, U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Council Delegate Nathan Notah.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — During a recent advocacy trip, members of the Law and Order Committee (LOC) met with U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ), congressional staff, members of the New Mexico delegation and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Majority to advance federal priorities related to public safety, education and food security.

Chairwoman Eugenia Charles-Newton, Vice Chair Nathan Notah, and Delegate Arbin Mitchell advocated for Public Law 93-638 contracts, law enforcement recruitment and retention, 105(L) Lease funding, scholarships, SNAP, and the stability of programs that provide essential services to Navajo communities. They also opposed prediction markets, a threat to tribal sovereignty, that is sweeping the Nation.

“Our purpose in coming to Washington, D.C., was not simply to identify the challenges facing the Navajo Nation, but to advocate for meaningful solutions,” Vice Chair Nathan Notah said. “We appreciate the senators and congressional staff who took the time to listen to our concerns, and we will continue following up with them. Our responsibility is to keep advocating until the Navajo Nation receives the support and resources necessary to provide the public safety and other essential services our people deserve.”

Notah said the trip was a productive in advocating to the Senate Appropriations staff, focused on strengthening federal support for Navajo Nation public safety and public service programs.

"We will continue advocating for advance appropriations and forward funding for Tribal public safety and public service programs, which would provide greater stability and predictability in funding. During our meetings, we also raised the need to establish the appropriate level of base funding and requested assistance in tracking down the historical funding levels identified in the 1997 base-funding report," Delegate Notah said. "Having a clear understanding of the historical funding baseline is important as we continue advocating for adequate and equitable federal funding for the Navajo Nation."

LOC Chair Charles-Newton emphasized the need to reassess federal base funding for law enforcement programs under the BIA, Office of Justice Services. Base funding was established in 1997 and implemented in 1999, and does not account for inflation, increased operating costs or the Nation's current public safety needs, and opportunity to hire more law enforcement.

Federal officials recommended that the LOC work with the Congressional Research Service and Interior appropriations staff to explore options for updating the funding structure and seek a review by the U.S. Department of the Interior of current funding levels.

The committee also raised concerns about law enforcement recruitment and retention. Approximately 149 patrol officers serve communities across Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, while limited funding continues to affect salaries, overtime, equipment, detention services, and the Nation's ability to compete for qualified personnel.

The LOC emphasized the importance of maintaining adequate 105(L) lease funding, which supports the use, operation, and maintenance of tribal facilities used to carry out federal programs, including public safety services. Maintaining this funding helps protect the federal and Navajo Nation investments already made in these facilities.

Delegate Mitchell advocated for advance appropriations for Bureau of Indian Education scholarship programs, noting that continuing resolutions and delays in federal appropriations can postpone scholarship payments and create uncertainty for Navajo students who depend on those funds for tuition and other educational expenses.

Food security was another priority. LOC members raised concerns about federal changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that could make it more difficult for eligible families to receive assistance. Chair Charles-Newton emphasized that many Navajo residents travel long distances for employment, groceries and other essential services, while high fuel costs place additional strain on household budgets.

Delegates also stressed the importance of protecting federal funding during continuing resolutions and future appropriations negotiations. Public safety services rely on a combination of P.L. 93-638 contracts, competitive grants and Navajo Nation revenues, making timely and adequate federal funding critical to maintaining services.

The LOC will continue working with Congress, federal agencies and the Navajo Nation Washington Office to advance solutions that strengthen public safety, protect educational opportunities and support food security for Navajo families.

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