

# SPEAKER'S REPORT

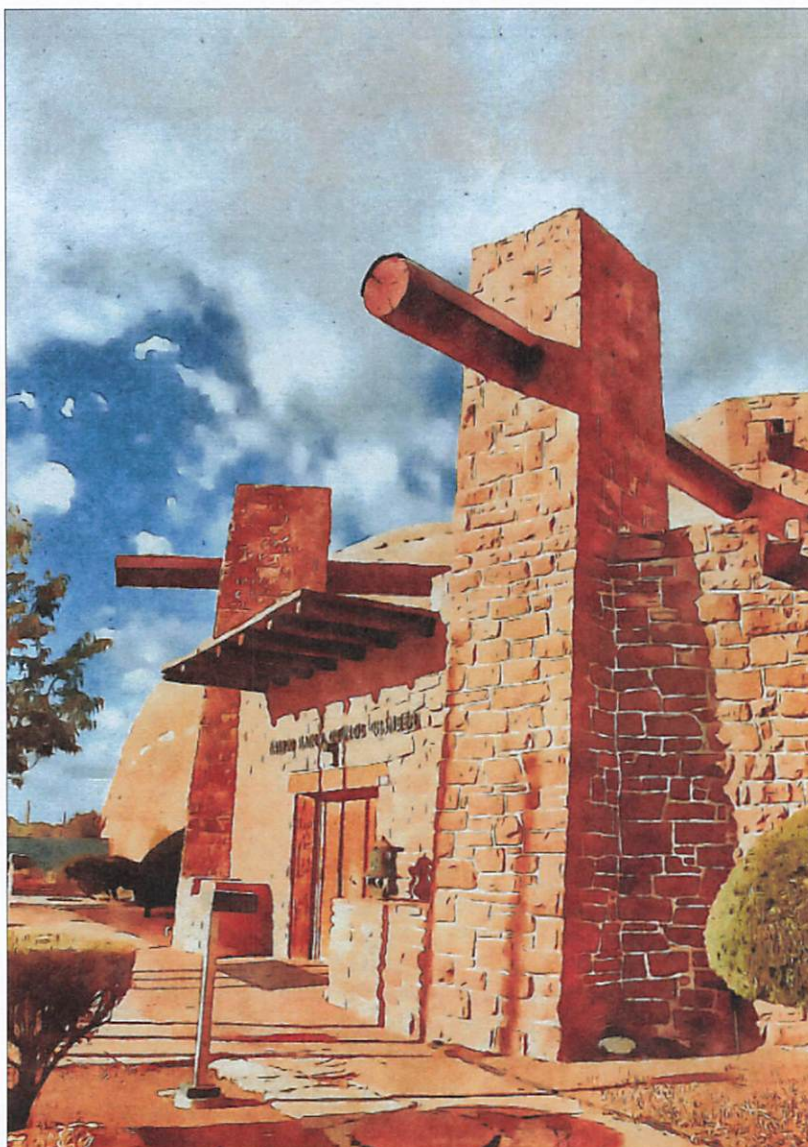
SPEAKER CRYSTALYNE CURLEY  
25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL



NORTHERN AGENCY COUNCIL  
SANOSTEE CHAPTER  
MARCH 15, 2025







**25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL**  
 PO BOX 3390, WINDOW ROCK, AZ 86515  
 PHONE: (928) 871-7160  
 WWW.NAVAJONATIONCOUNCIL.ORG

## **OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER**

Manuel Rico  
**Chief of Staff**  
*mrico@navajo-nsn.gov*

Jared Touchin  
**Deputy Chief of Staff**  
*jared.touchin@navajo-nsn.gov*

Clarinda Begay  
**Legislative Financial Advisor**  
*clarindabegay@navajo-nsn.gov*

Mary Nez  
**Executive Assistant**  
*mary.nez@navajo-nsn.gov*

Clarissa Begay  
**Legislative Staff Assistant**  
*crbegay@navajo-nsn.gov*

Marcarlo Roanhorse  
**Legislative Staff Assistant**  
*marcarloroanhorse@navajo-nsn.gov*

Arthur Hardy, Jr.  
**Legislative Staff Assistant**  
*arthur.hardyr@navajo-nsn.gov*

Mihio Manus  
**Communication Director**  
*mihio.manus@navajo-nsn.gov*

Jason John  
**Sr. Public Information Officer**  
*jasonajohn@navajo-nsn.gov*

Tatyana Billy  
**Sr. Public Information Officer**  
*tatyana.billy@navajo-nsn.gov*

Jacquelyn Morgan  
**Senior Office Specialist**  
*jacquelynmorgan@navajo-nsn.gov*

Emerson Notah  
**Computer Operations Manager**  
*emersononotah@navajo-nsn.gov*

Bennie Becenti  
**Network Manager**  
*bbecenti@navajo-nsn.gov*

Gayle Neboyia  
**Legislative AMS**  
*gayle.neboyia@navajo-nsn.gov*

Davina Begaye  
**Legislative AMS**  
*dbbegaye@navajo-nsn.gov*

JoAnne George  
**Legislative AMS**  
*joanne.george@navajo-nsn.gov*

## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL APPROVES FY2025 COMPREHENSIVE BUDGET, IMPLEMENTING AMENDMENTS THAT SUPPORT ESSENTIAL SERVICES

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - On Thursday, Feb. 27, the 25th Navajo Nation Council voted in favor of Legislation No. 0012-25, approving the Comprehensive Budget for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2025. The budget passed with amendments designed to protect employee benefits, education, public safety, Navajo Nation veterans, and essential services for the community.

"It's good to be here today to discuss the FY2025 Comprehensive Budget. I know we've had extensive discussions on this legislation. There was plenty of work done by the Naabik'iyati' Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee (BFC), and the oversight committees to bring this legislation to where it is today," said legislation sponsor and BFC Chair Shaandiin Parrish.

The FY2025 Comprehensive Budget allocates approximately \$541 million to the Navajo Nation's Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches.

Included in the approved budget are the following allocations from the Personnel Lapse Fund and Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance (UUFB):

- \$1.4 million for compensation and step increases for Navajo Nation employees
- \$4.8 million for a 4% general wage adjustment for all employees
- \$550,000 to address unmet needs for Navajo Chapter Veterans' Organizations
- \$921,179 for Chapter Summer Youth Employment Programs
- \$1.5 million for one-time chapter utility payments
- \$2 million to support solid waste projects for Navajo Nation Chapters

The budget also addressed the significant increase in the Office of the President and Vice President's (OPVP) proposed budget. Several delegates voiced concerns that this increase came at the expense of Executive Branch divisions and departments that deliver direct services.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty put forth an amendment moving \$650,000 from the OPVP budget to the Department of Water Resources to support travel, supplies, utilities, repairs, maintenance, contractual services, and capital outlay.

Resources and Development Committee Chair Brenda Jesus initiated an amendment moving \$60,000 from the OPVP budget to the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA) to fund a criminal

enforcement position and operational costs.

Council Delegates also passed amendments using the UUFB to benefit Navajo Nation scholarships, emergency medical services, and annual leave payouts.

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) Chair Vince James introduced an amendment proposing a \$2 million allocation from the UUFB for scholarships through the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance.

Budget and Finance Committee Vice Chair Carl R. Slater and Law and Order Committee Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton motioned for an amendment allocating \$7.4 million from the UUFB for capital outlay expenses, including specialized vehicles, defibrillators, and auto-pulses for Emergency Medical Services.

Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez proposed an amendment reallocating \$150,000 from the OPVP budget to the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration and \$70,000 from the Navajo Division of Health and \$70,000 from the UUFB to the Navajo Nation Library for operational costs.

Council Delegates Crotty and James offered an amendment to allocate \$1.4 million from the UUFB for compensation related to annual leave forfeiture payouts for calendar year 2024.

"This budget includes the priorities presented during the BFC's public hearings across Navajo agencies while adhering to base planning amounts presented in the Budget Instruction Manual," Chair Parrish said. "The Council also stressed the need to carefully evaluate the potential effects of any budget increases on the overall financial stability of divisions and departments that provide essential services directly to the Navajo people. I commend my colleagues for their diligent work in preparing this budget."

The 25th Navajo Nation Council voted 19 in favor and one opposed to approve the FY2025 Comprehensive Budget. Once the resolution is certified by Speaker Crystalyne Curley and delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren will have ten calendar days to consider the resolution.



## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL CELEBRATES THE UTAH-NAVAJO NATION WATER RIGHTS SETTLEMENT INTERLOCUTORY DECREE

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – On Feb. 19, members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council joined Utah Lieutenant Governor Deidre Henderson, state legislators, and representatives from the Utah Division of Water Rights at the state capitol to commemorate the signing of an Interlocutory Decree. This decree grants the Navajo Nation in Utah a water allocation of 81,500 acre-feet per year.

The adjudication is a key component of the Utah-Navajo Nation Water Rights Settlement, which secures the Nation's rights to both surface and groundwater from the Colorado River within Utah. The settlement also includes significant funding provisions for water infrastructure development, the Navajo Water Development Trust Fund, and the Navajo Operation, Maintenance, and Replacement Trust Fund.

Lt. Governor Henderson called the signing of the Interlocutory Decree a historic milestone, made possible by the collaboration of state and tribal leaders, both past and present.

"In Utah, the Beehive State, the beehive symbolizes communities coming together to achieve greater things than the sum of all parts," Lt. Governor Henderson said. "This demonstrates that we can overcome challenges and work together to bring life and hope to all communities in Utah."

Budget and Finance Committee Chair Shaandiin Parrish (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) attended the event, emphasizing that years of advocacy for the settlement will now provide hope for future generations. Chair Parrish also noted the Nation's continued commitment to advocating for issues that benefit Navajo residents in Utah.

"This event is a step in the right direction," she said. "We came together as partners, and this decree represents that partnership. It will provide our communities with essential needs like indoor plumbing and running water, which nearly half of the homes in Navajo-Utah still lack."

Navajo Nation Chief Legislative Counsel Michelle Espino highlighted that the Interlocutory Decree will bring running water to many tribal homes in Utah.

"There are approximately 6,000 Navajo residents on the Utah side of the Nation, and half of these residents live without running water," Espino said. "We need to be able to move this water like the states do, and this

settlement is a critical step forward in fulfilling our vision of providing water infrastructure."

The Utah-Navajo Nation Water Rights Settlement Interlocutory Decree represents more than a legal formality; it is a commitment to improving the quality of life for Navajo residents who lack access to basic water necessities in their homes.

Council Delegate Rickie Nez and acting Attorney General Heather Clah attended the day's event. Council Delegate Parrish and members of the Navajo Water Rights team were recognized on the floor of the House of Representative by Rep. Logan Monson.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council extends its gratitude to the Office of Utah's Governor and Lieutenant Governor, all state legislators, Utah Division of Water Rights, Navajo Nation Water Rights Unit, and the 23rd Navajo Nation Council for their hard work and partnership in finalizing the Interlocutory Decree.



Left to right: Executive Director of Utah Department of Natural Resources Joel Ferry, Utah Lt. Governor Deidre Henderson, Council Delegate Shaandiin Parrish, and Navajo Nation Chief Legislative Counsel Michelle Espino.



## COUNCIL MEMBERS COMMEND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NAVAJO-GALLUP WATER SUPPLY PROJECT AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2025 IN CONGRESS

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The 25th Navajo Nation Council applauds the introduction of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project Amendments Act of 2025, led by U.S. Senators Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.), Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), and John Curtis (R-Utah). The bipartisan legislation amends the existing Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, securing the necessary resources and timeline to complete the delivery of drinking water to communities in northwestern New Mexico.

Championed in the House by U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández (D-N.M.) and co-sponsored by U.S. Rep. Melanie Stansbury (D-N.M.), the bill aims to secure additional funding and to extend the timeframe for the water projects to be completed.

"We are deeply grateful to the New Mexico delegation for coming together to secure funding for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project," said New Mexico Caucus Chairwoman Amber Kanazbah Crotty. "Senators Luján and Heinrich, along with Representatives Leger Fernández and Stansbury, have consistently supported this vital project for our Diné citizens, who have endured decades of water scarcity, contamination, and dangerous arsenic levels."

The project will extend a 300-mile-long water pipeline, construct two water treatment plants, build 19 pumping stations, and develop multiple water storage tanks.

This milestone ensures that an estimated 250,000 people within the Eastern and Northern Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, and the City of Gallup will finally receive clean, reliable drinking water.

The completion of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project represents a major infrastructure development that symbolizes progress, resilience, and the power of dedicated leadership.

"The Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project is a beacon of hope for our people. This is more than just a water project—it's about securing the health, well-being, and future of our communities," said Speaker Crystalyne Curley. "Our past leaders had the foresight to fight for the New Mexico water rights years ago to ensure our people no longer have to struggle for access to one of the most basic human necessities."

In addition to securing the additional funding, the legislation includes key amendments to increase funding authorization to match updated construction costs, extend the project timeline to 2029, establish long-term operation



**Speaker Crystalyne Curley discusses the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project with U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) in Washington D.C. on Sept. 24, 2024.**

and maintenance trust funds, and expand the project's service area to reach additional Diné communities without access to running water.

The amending legislation has received support from the Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the State of New Mexico, and the City of Gallup.

Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez recalled a visit with former U.S. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema to an area where a resident lived without indoor plumbing, despite being less than three miles from existing water infrastructure.

"This infrastructure provides stability and ensures that water will reach those who need it most. It gives me great hope, and I am committed to continuing our advocacy to ensure water remains accessible to all our people, particularly in communities impacted by coal mining," said Council Delegate Dr. Nez. "I extend my gratitude to all the partners who contributed to this effort. We are now seeing visible progress."

The 25th Navajo Nation Council thanks U.S. Senators Ben Ray Luján, Martin Heinrich, John Curtis, and U.S. Representatives Teresa Leger Fernández and Melanie Stansbury for their support.



## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL CELEBRATES INTRODUCTION OF THE NORTHEASTERN ARIZONA INDIAN WATER RIGHTS SETTLEMENT BEFORE CONGRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council joined Hopi Chairman Tim Nuvangyaoma, U.S. Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ), and Congressman Eli Crane (R-AZ-02) for a reception at the Navajo Nation Washington Office to celebrate the introduction of the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement before Congress.

In the Senate, the bill was introduced by Senators Kelly and Ruben Gallego (D-AZ). In the House, it was introduced by U.S. Representatives Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ), Greg Stanton (D-AZ), Eli Crane (R-AZ), Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), David Schweikert (R-AZ), and Yassamin Ansari (D-AZ).

During the reception, Speaker Curley emphasized the settlement's role in securing prosperity for future generations of Diné, Hopi, and San Juan Southern Paiute.

"It's an exciting day to see this settlement introduced. It's been a long time coming," Speaker Curley said. "People doubted that three tribes could unite. This dispute was imposed on us, but with something as vital as water at stake, we came together—not for ourselves, but for our children."

Hopi Chairman Nuvangyaoma called the settlement's introduction a historic moment.

"I want to thank our Navajo and San Juan Southern Paiute relatives for setting aside differences, as we did as Hopi," he said. "This settlement isn't for us—it's for the sustainability and survival of future generations. It must happen."

The proposed settlement guarantees access to meaningful and reliable Upper Basin Colorado River Water, as well as Fourth Priority Lower Basin Colorado River Water—an allocation more secure than CAP Non-Indian Agricultural water. It also provides the flexibility to transport Arizona water from New Mexico and Utah into Arizona, a practice currently prohibited under the Law of the River. Additionally, it allows Upper Basin Colorado River Water to be used in the Nation's Lower Basin communities and vice versa.

The settlement would also secure nearly \$5 billion for water delivery infrastructure, ensuring long-term water access. These investments are critical



Council Delegates Germaine Simonson, Cherilyn Yazzie, and Speaker Crystalyne Curley joined Senator Mark Kelly and Hopi Chairman Tim Nuvangyaoma at a reception celebrating the introduction of the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement before Congress.

for improving water management and reliability. It also provides an alternative source of clean drinking water for Arizona communities that currently depend almost entirely on groundwater.

"As you know, water is everything. Without it, we can't grow crops or maintain a decent standard of living," said Sen. Kelly. "We must build bipartisan support to make this happen."

Representative Crane expressed his commitment to the settlement's success.

"We have a lot of work ahead, and I'm honored to help push this across the finish line," said Rep. Crane.

Council Delegates Cherilyn Yazzie, Carl R. Slater, Germaine Simonson, and Nathan Notah attended the reception.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council thanks Congressional leaders for introducing the settlement and for their continued efforts to secure its approval during this session.



## HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE REVIEWS U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION MEMORANDUM ON TITLE VI AND ITS IMPACT ON NAVAJO NATION

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Wednesday, Feb. 26, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee held a special meeting to receive a report from the Navajo Nation Department of Justice regarding a recent memorandum issued by the U.S. Department of Education. The memorandum provides the Department's interpretation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution and their implications for anti-discrimination policies.

The letter issued on Feb. 14 by Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Craig Trainor warns that the U.S. Department of Education "will no longer tolerate the overt and covert racial discrimination that has become widespread in this Nation's educational institution" and cites "diversity, equity, and inclusion" programs. It further states that the Department's interpretation applies to "all preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education institutions, as well as state educational agencies" who receive federal funding.

Speaker Crystalyne Curley and HEHSC Chair Vince James issued a memo last week, calling on the Navajo Nation Department of Justice (NNDOJ), Department of Diné Education, and other entities to come before the HEHSC with their analysis and recommendations in response to the Feb. 14 letter.

"We understand that the letter issued by the U.S. Department of Education is very concerning and brings about many questions from educational institutions on and off the Navajo Nation, so it is important that we bring everyone to the table so that we have a unified stance in response to the federal government," said HEHSC Chair Vince James. "Their interpretation of the Civil Rights Act appears to contradict many longstanding interpretations."

In a written response provided by the Department of Diné Education, it states that the U.S. Department of Education "misinterprets the language of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."

Navajo Nation Acting Attorney General Heather Clah presented the committee with a memorandum that emphasized that the Navajo Nation's relationship with the federal government is not founded on race, color, or national origin. Instead, it is a government-to-government relationship based on political classification and supported by trust and treaty obligations.



**The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee will move forward in working with NNDOJ to formulate a response letter to the U.S. Department of Education.**

The NNDOJ memorandum explains that educational programs serving Navajo students are not categorized by race, color, or national origin. It also asserts that negatively impacting these programs, which are based on trust and treaty obligations, undermines tribal sovereignty and the unique legal relationship between Indian tribes and the U.S. government.

The memorandum also addressed potential impacts to admission practices, educational programming, and standardized testing that could be implemented by institutions to avoid retaliation by the ED.

During the discussion, Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez questioned the potential impacts on Navajo students attending colleges and universities outside the Navajo Nation, as well as Navajo employees living off the Nation, and recommended that the Nation address their needs in any correspondence or consultation with the federal government regarding the White House's Executive Orders.

The committee will move forward in working with NNDOJ to formulate a response letter to the U.S. Department of Education by Feb. 28.

Council Delegate George Tolth stated that he would sponsor legislation to reflect the Navajo Nation's position that the federal government should maintain its trust and treaty obligations.

HEHSC voted unanimously, with four in favor and none opposed, in accepting the report from the Navajo Department of Justice.



## COUNCIL DELEGATE SHAWNA ANN CLAW HOSTS EVENT TO KICK OFF DINÉ BIZAAD AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE



**Speaker Crystalyne Curley (right) and President Buu Nygren met with Representative Bruce Westerman (left) to convey their support for the Nation's Water Settlements that are currently before Congress.**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Jan. 30, Council Delegate Shawna Ann Claw (Chinle) joined students and staff from Chinle Junior High School (CJHS) to kick off a special event celebrating Diné Bizaad as the official language of the Navajo Nation.

This milestone follows Delegate Claw's successful passage of a bill during a special session of the 25th Navajo Nation Council on December 16, 2024. The bill amended Title 1 of the Navajo Nation Code, formally recognizing Diné Bizaad as the official language. It was signed into law by Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren on December 24, 2024.

Delegate Claw remarked that the event, dubbed Diné Bizaad Day, symbolized a powerful declaration to both the Navajo Nation and the United States. It affirmed the Diné people's commitment to strengthening their sovereignty by designating Diné Bizaad as an official language in the nation's legal framework.

"It sends a clear message to our congressional leaders that we, the Navajo people, will remain steadfast in our values from time immemorial by embracing our language, which makes us unique, resilient, and beautiful," Delegate Claw said. "Through our traditional language, we are able to live in harmony with all that exists. Let us honor our ancestors, our Navajo Code Talkers, and our grandparents who gifted us this beautiful language, enabling us to continue living in harmony with the world around us."

Chinle Unified School District (CUSD) Board President Dr. Paul Guy Jr. expressed gratitude to the district, CUSD Superintendent Quincy Natay, acting Associate Superintendent Sheila Betz, CJHS Principal Melissa Martin, and Council Delegate Germaine Simonson for their support of the event.

Dr. Guy shared that his parents and grandparents not only taught him to speak Navajo but also impressed upon him the deep importance of never forgetting his language. They emphasized that it is a bridge to his heritage, identity, and the respect woven into the relationships within his community.

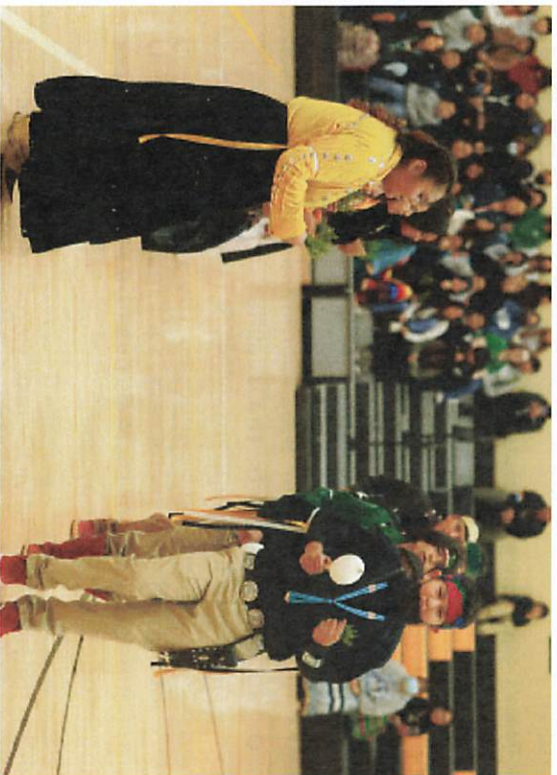
"Start learning to speak Navajo. It's incredibly important—our language is powerful, sacred, and strong. When you see elders, greet them in Diné Bizaad. Don't be embarrassed," Dr. Guy said. "In our language, when we greet one another, we acknowledge our relationships and clans. Navajo is more than just words; it establishes kinship, creating a foundation of respect and understanding in how we address each other."

The Náshdoíłbeí Diné Club Yei bi Chei Dancers, Ribbon Dancers, Miss Central Preteen Kimalley Carr, Miss CJHS Nadine Francis, and other students performed songs in Diné Bizaad during Diné Bizaad Day.

Council Delegate Claw encouraged the students to continue learning their language and culture, emphasizing the importance of their role in preserving their heritage. She also shared that she is urging her colleagues to support similar events in their own chapters to celebrate Diné Bizaad as the official language of the Navajo Nation.

"From our youth, we gain energy and a new perspective on the world. You are the leaders, and we follow you. Your actions speak louder than your words," she said. "Today, across the Navajo Nation, Chinle will be the first to kick off the Diné Bizaad legislation."







## NAVAJO NATION MISSING AND MURDERED DINÉ TASK FORCE ADDRESSES CRITICAL UPDATES TO PROTECT THE DINÉ PEOPLE



**Chairwoman Amber Kanazbah Crotty reaffirmed the Task Force's commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of Diné citizens**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives (MMDR) Task Force continues to address the crisis of missing and murdered Diné relatives. The Task Force is focusing on updating the Tribal Community Response Plan (TCRP), enhancing interagency coordination, and advancing the development of a comprehensive MMDR database.

During the recent MMDR Task Force meeting, members shared significant updates on ongoing efforts to protect the Diné people and support impacted families. Discussions centered around improving the TCRP, updating contact information, clarifying the roles of various advocacy and law enforcement programs, and establishing better tracking of the response plan's implementation.

"We are working diligently to strengthen partnerships, update our Tribal Community Response Plan, and build a sustainable MMDR database that reflects the needs of our people," said Chairwoman Amber Kanazbah Crotty. "Our families deserve action, transparency, and coordinated care. The work we do here honors every missing and murdered relative and the families who continue to seek justice."

Advocates Laurelle Sheppard, Program Director for Victim Witness Services for Northern Arizona, and Tonya Grass, Victim Advocate Supervisor for Utah Navajo Health Systems, reported on the urgent need to update the TCRP to reflect current services and

contact information. They emphasized the need for consistent collaboration among programs such as victim advocacy, social services, and law enforcement.

"It is vital that our Tribal Community Response Plan accurately reflects the realities on the ground," said Laurelle Sheppard, MMDR Task Force member. "Advocates must be engaged from the very beginning of a missing persons case. Our families need timely support, and our systems must be prepared to work together from day one."

Tonya Grass, MMDR Task Force member, stressed the importance of ensuring that services respond to the evolving needs of families.

"Too often, our advocates are only brought in after critical time has passed. We need a unified approach that activates all available resources the moment a loved one is reported missing," Grass said. "By updating this plan, we can close the gaps in service and provide the compassionate, coordinated care our people deserve."

The Task Force also received an update from Dr. Jason Arviso, Vice President of Operations at Navajo Technical University (NTU), who reported on the development of the MMDR database. This initiative aims to centralize and secure information about missing Diné relatives, support research, promote cultural sensitivity, and improve communication across jurisdictions.



## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL ADVOCATES FOR CAPITAL OUTLAY EFFICIENCY, EDUCATION EQUITY, AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN NEW MEXICO

SANTA FE, N.M. – On Feb. 6, the 25th Navajo Nation Council, led by Speaker Crystalyne Curley, met with New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, legislative leaders, and cabinet secretaries at the New Mexico State Capitol to discuss key legislative priorities, including an efficient capital outlay process, equitable education funding, and critical infrastructure improvements.

During discussions with Governor Lujan Grisham, Speaker Curley addressed the exclusion of the Navajo Nation from the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department's (IAD) \$30 million capital outlay funding. The governor stated that the Navajo Nation had not submitted project proposals that met the state's funding criteria, emphasizing the need for better communication and coordination between the Nation's executive branch and the state government.

"The Navajo Nation deserves equitable access to these funds," Speaker Curley said. "Our communities need better infrastructure and education investments, and it's critical the state government works with the 25th Navajo Nation Council to streamline these projects."

Council members along with Speaker Curley met with Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart and Speaker of the House Javier Martínez to discuss legislative efforts that could benefit the Navajo Nation. The 25th Navajo Nation Council advocated for equitable education funding and urged the state to work collaboratively with the Council in addressing disparities in the Navajo Nation.

During a meeting with the Public Education Department, officials shared the success of the summer reading program, which showed increased literacy rates among tribal students. Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton inquired about incorporating the Diné language into the program, and officials suggested a full-day summer school program with language, science, and cultural education components to fully utilize funding and resources with the department.

Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez advocated for additional resources for Head Start facilities, while the Department of Diné Education Interim Superintendent Roy Tracy emphasized the need for culturally designed school buildings.



**NM Caucus meets with New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham during NM Indian Day.**

Delegate Dr. Nez met with Governor Lujan Grisham to advocate for road improvements, particularly the Indian Service Route 321 in Crystal, N.M., and the Red Lake Chapter House road project. During the meeting, Governor Lujan Grisham expressed her support for Delegate Dr. Nez's road initiatives and asked that he prioritize one of his two projects for the state to move forward on.

"These road projects will make a significant impact on our communities," said Delegate Dr. Nez, "Indian Service Route 321 has never been paved before, it is 7.7 miles of unpaved road that Crystal uses a daily basis, similar to the streets in Navajo, NM and Whiteface Mountain Road in Coalmine, NM - these are routes used on a daily basis for the benefit of all populations"

Governor Lujan Grisham lent her full support to establishing the Navajo Code Talker Museum in the Four Corners region, recognizing its importance in preserving the legacy of the Code Talkers.

Despite the challenges surrounding funding allocations, the 25th Navajo Nation Council remains committed to advocating for resources and ensuring the needs of Navajo communities are addressed. The Council will continue working with state leaders and legislators to push for equitable funding, improved infrastructure, and economic development.



# 2025 NORTHERN NAVAJO NATION AGENCY INAUGURATION CEREMONY





## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL CELEBRATES VETERANS, YOUTH LEADERS, AND EQUESTRIAN CHAMPIONS



**The 25th Navajo Nation Council remains committed to uplifting and honoring individuals who make meaningful contributions to their communities through service, advocacy, and cultural preservation**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Tuesday, Feb. 28, the 25th Navajo Nation Council recognized the contributions of Diné youth leaders, equestrian professionals, and veteran advocates who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to their communities and culture.

Council Delegate Brenda Jesus (Oaksprings, St. Michaels) led a special recognition for two distinguished Army veterans, Robert Smith Sr. and Leo Chischilly, honoring their service and continued dedication to Navajo veterans.

Smith, a Vietnam War veteran who served 10 months overseas before his honorable discharge in 1963, was recognized for his tireless efforts in advocating for local veterans and his initiative to establish a veterans' park in Oak Springs. Despite personal hardships, including the loss of his wife and son in 2020, Smith remains a strong advocate for his community, working to create a space of honor and healing for fellow veterans.

"You remind me of my father," Delegate Jesus shared. "It's good to feel like you have family, and I feel I have family in Oak Springs."

Chischilly, who served as the veterans' commander for the Oak Springs and Pine Springs chapters, was commended for his advocacy at all levels of government. His family donated initial funds for the Oak Springs and Pine Springs Veterans Park project in 2018, a vision that continues to be realized with support from current leadership.

The local Veterans Organization Commander Linda OneSalt expressed gratitude to Chischilly's family, stating, "Leo taught me a lot. I admired his poise and dedication to his community. Even when faced with harsh words from delegates, he remained calm. I intend to carry on his vision." In appreciation, Chischilly's family was presented with a commemorative quilt.

Delegate Andy Nez (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) honored students from Window Rock High School for their work on bringing awareness to domestic violence and acknowledged their efforts in organizing community events. The Domestic

Violence Awareness Walk held early winter was successful because of their hard work.

"Your presence and participation in your community are key to making a difference," Nez stated. "I hope one of you takes a seat in this Council or even the Speaker's chair one day. Success comes in different ways, but overall, my main advice is to give back to society".

Among those recognized was Harmony Begay, a former Miss Navajo Pine High School. Delegate Dr. Nez commended her dedication and desire to community service during her entire reign. One example he shared was her participation to assist unsheltered relatives during the holidays.

Delegate Curtis Yanito (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) revered the achievements of Diné equestrian athletes, highlighting their role in preserving the deep cultural and historical significance of horsemanship within the Navajo Nation.

Among the honorees was Capt. Alonzo Tohtsonie, a 23-year Army veteran and intelligence officer with the Army Reserves, recognized for his leadership in equestrian enforcement. Tohtsonie is also served on the U.S. Army's polo team.

Professional horse racing jockey Cordarelton Benn was also honored for his success in the horse racing industry, having competed professionally for 11 years and ranking in the top 50 nationwide for the past five years. With 17 wins last year and total career earnings exceeding \$5 million, Benn's accomplishments were celebrated by the Council.

"I'm proud of all our children, especially those recognized here today," said Delegate Yanito, emphasizing the importance of celebrating and supporting young Diné talent.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council remains committed to uplifting and honoring individuals who make meaningful contributions to their communities through service, advocacy, and cultural preservation.



## THE 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL PASSES LEGISLATION URGING NEW MEXICO GOVERNOR TO APPOINT NAVAJO CITIZEN TO HOUSE DISTRICT 6 VACANCY

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Jan. 28, the 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously passed emergency legislation urging New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to appoint a Navajo citizen to fill the vacant seat in New Mexico's House District 6.

Legislation 0008-25, sponsored by Speaker Crystalyne Curley and co-sponsored and presented by Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, seeks to address the vacancy left by the passing of former Representative Eliseo Lee Alcon, who served for 16 years in the New Mexico State Legislature.

"House District 6 is home to a large and vibrant Navajo population, and it is vital that their voices are meaningfully represented in the state legislature," Speaker Curley said. "The individual chosen to represent this district must not only understand the unique needs of our people but also be deeply committed to advocating for our communities' interests and well-being."

This legislation was introduced as an emergency measure because it directly impacts Navajo sovereignty. It calls on Gov. Lujan Grisham to make a temporary appointment to the seat in District 6 until a special election can be held.

"The appointment would send a powerful message of representation and strengthen the relationship between the state government and the Navajo Nation, fostering greater cooperation on critical issues affecting both the state and tribal communities," said Delegate Crotty.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council passed the legislation with unanimous support, voting 21 in favor, none opposed. The Council also extends its gratitude to Gov. Lujan Grisham for her continued partnership with the Navajo Nation in advancing mutual interests and fostering positive collaboration.



Co-sponsored and presented by Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, seeks to address the vacancy left by the passing of former Representative Eliseo Lee Alcon, who served for 16 years in the New Mexico State Legislature.



## NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL APPROVES LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved Legislation 0250-24, the Navajo Department of Emergency Medical Service's (EMS) schedule of fees, ensuring that the EMS program is equipped to provide critical life-saving care and maintain a sustainable system for emergency medical responses.

"Our goal is to protect and improve the health and safety of our communities," said Dr. Andy Nez, sponsor of the legislation. "This action ensures that our EMS program has the resources it needs to deliver high-quality emergency medical services to every corner of the Navajo Nation. The revenue generated from this fee schedule will directly support critical services and ensure the long-term viability of this program."

The approved schedule introduces a structure for EMS to collect fees for emergency response and medical transportation services from third-party payers such as Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, and other entities. The revenue will strengthen the program's budget, enabling EMS to sustain its 24/7 operations, upgrade equipment, and expand training programs for medical staff. Additionally, the schedule outlines rates for non-emergency transport, advanced life support, specialty care, and training services, ensuring transparency and efficiency in revenue generation.

The legislation directly benefits Navajo Nation residents by enhancing the quality and availability of emergency care. By approving this schedule, the Navajo Nation ensures that its EMS program remains a reliable and strong resource for our people.

The fee schedule supports the Navajo Nation's efforts to achieve financial sustainability for essential services. Funds collected will be allocated to an enterprise fund exclusively for EMS operations, preventing reliance on the Navajo Nation General Fund. This system ensures accountability and compliance with federal contracts under Public Law 93-638 and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

Speaker Crystalyne Curley of the 25th Navajo Nation Council commended the unanimous



Dr. Andy Nez, sponsor of the Legislation 0250-24, the Navajo Department of Emergency Medical Service's (EMS) schedule of fees.

vote, calling it a testament to the Council's commitment to the well-being of the Navajo people. "This legislation addresses a critical need for sustainable funding in our emergency medical services. It empowers our EMS program to continue providing life-saving services across the Nation."

The legislation was approved following a thorough review process involving the Law and Order Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee, and the Naabik'íyáti' Committee. It now serves as a model for strengthening public health infrastructure while ensuring financial accountability.

Legislation 0250-24 was approved with a vote of 19 in favor and none opposed. Once certified and delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren will have up to ten calendar days to consider the resolution.



## NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL MARKS OPENING DAY OF 2025 WINTER SESSION

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The 25th Navajo Nation Council kicked off the 2025 Winter Session with an agenda that fostered Ké and Hózhó—values of unity and harmony—between the three branches of government.

The session began with a color posting by the Chinle High School ROTC, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Miss Navajo Nation Ranisha C. Begay. Cleveland Middle School students performed the National Anthem, and Dr. Louva Dahozy delivered the invocation, setting a tone of respect and unity for the day's proceedings.

Over 200 attendees filled the chamber to capacity, including tribal leaders, community members, and scholars. Notable guests included former Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council and recently appointed New Mexico Deputy Secretary of Indian Affairs, Seth Damon, as well as former council delegates Lomardo Aseret and Young Jeff Tom.

The University of New Mexico Master's and Ph.D. candidates, led by Associate Professor Wendy S. Greyeyes, Ph.D. (Diné), were also recognized, underscoring the critical role of education in shaping the future of Navajo leadership.

The opening day featured a presentation on Human Trafficking Prevention by Elarina Nakai, Community Involvement Specialist from the Division of Child and Family Services. Her address highlighted key issues surrounding the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people.

The session agenda included the selection of a new Speaker for the 25th Navajo Nation Council, the delivery of the State of the Nation address by

President Buu Nygren and Vice President Richelle Montoya, and a report from Navajo Nation Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council extends its gratitude to all visiting officials and attendees who filled the chamber with positivity during the opening day of the 2025 Winter Council Session.

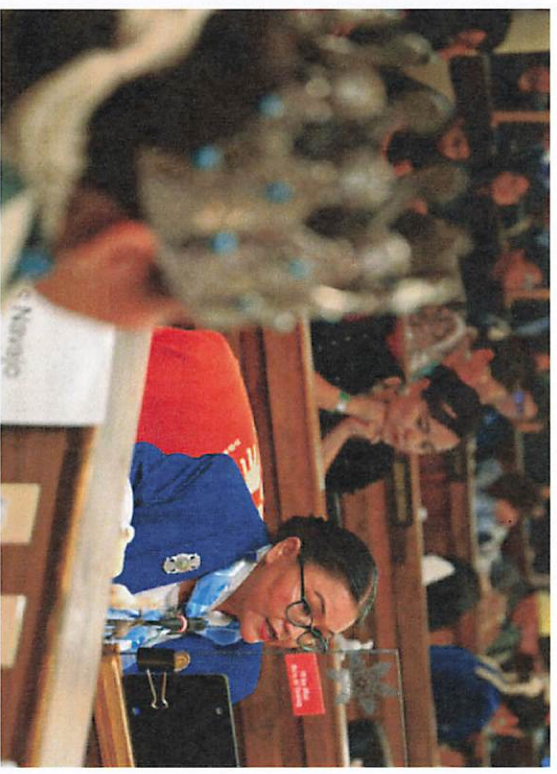
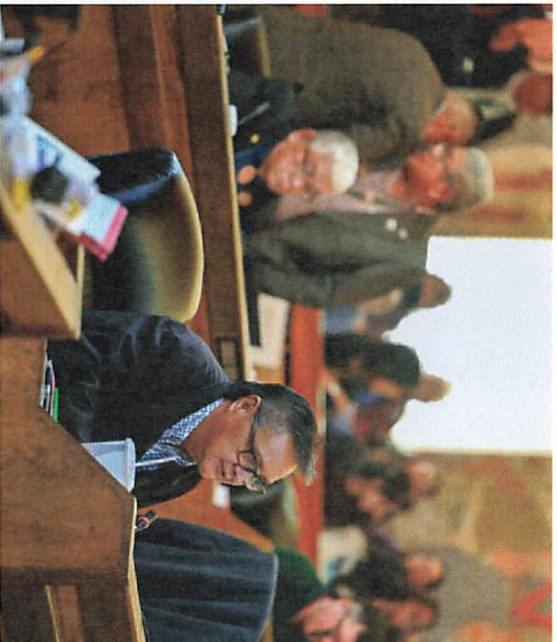


**Dr. Louva Dahozy delivered the invocation for 2025 Winter Session**



**Cleveland Middle School students performed the National Anthem, and Dr. Louva Dahozy delivered the invocation, setting a tone of respect and unity for the day's proceedings.**







## BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE RECEIVES UPDATE ON SANCTIONED PROGRAMS AND CALLS FOR STRONGER ACCOUNTABILITY

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Friday, Feb. 28, the Budget and Finance Committee (BFC) held a special meeting to receive an update from the Office of the Auditor General on the status of Navajo Nation programs under sanction for Fiscal Year 2025.

The report outlined persistent compliance issues across four sanctioned programs with unresolved audit findings and incomplete corrective actions.

Acting Auditor General Helen Brown reported that two programs under the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)—the Navajo Nation Fair Office and the Tribal Ranch Program—remain sanctioned due to long-standing financial mismanagement, inadequate oversight, and failure to address corrective actions over the past decade.

The report also highlighted ongoing sanctions for two programs under the Department of Economic Development (DED)—the Business Industrial Development Fund (BIDF) and P-Card activities—due to poor financial controls, noncompliance with lending policies, and a lack of accountability.

"These repeated findings represent more than just financial missteps; they are long-standing issues that compromise the integrity of our Nation's resources," said Budget and Finance Committee Chairwoman Shaandiin Parrish. "It is imperative that these divisions prioritize meaningful action, not only to resolve findings but to restore the public's confidence in our governance."

Both DNR and DED continue facing sanctions due to unresolved audit findings exposing systemic issues in financial management, oversight, and accountability. The Navajo Nation Fair Office and Tribal Ranch Program have been sanctioned for nearly a decade, while BIDF and P-Card activities in DED face similar issues.

Vice Chair Carl R. Slater stressed the need for innovative solutions like blockchain technology to bring transparency and improve financial oversight. "The people deserve to see progress, not continued excuses," said Vice Chair Slater. "Sanctions were never intended to be indefinite. We must hold our programs accountable to achieve real, measurable improvements. Tools like blockchain and other oversight reforms can help us modernize our approach to financial integrity."

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty called for hearings to fully address the sanctioned programs, suggesting noncompliance should lead to financial penalties or cost-sharing for repeat audits. "For over a decade, we've heard the same reports with little change," said Delegate Crotty.



**Budget and Finance Committee voted four in favor and none opposed to accept the Office of the Auditor General's report.**

"It is time to establish clear expectations, meaningful deadlines, and real consequences when programs fail to take action. Our priority must be protecting the financial stability of the Navajo Nation and ensuring our people receive the services they deserve."

The committee agreed to schedule hearings with sanctioned programs, review policy reforms to shorten corrective action timelines, and assess the costs of ongoing sanctions. They also requested follow-up reports on fiscal agent activities, audit costs, and withheld funds.

"Our collective goal is to resolve these findings and get these programs back on track," said Council Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie. "We must ensure our audit processes are supported, funded, and respected, and that those responsible for these programs are actively working to protect the resources of our Nation."

The Budget and Finance Committee voted four in favor, and none opposed, to accept the Office of the Auditor General's report on the sanctioned Navajo Nation programs for Fiscal Year 2025.



## NAVAJO-HOPI LAND COMMISSION APPROVES RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR GALLUP WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo-Hopi Land Commission (NHLC) passed a resolution approving the rights-of-way and temporary construction easements to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for the Gallup Water Supply Project, a significant infrastructure development aimed at expanding access to clean water for Navajo families.

Resolution No. RDCMY-51-18 grants authorization for the construction, operation, and maintenance of 12.87 acres of the Tse Bonito Tract, of the Gallup Water Supply Project on tribal trust land within the Tsayatoh Chapter vicinity in McKinley County, New Mexico. This decision ensures compliance with the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act and affirms NHLC's authority over lands taken into trust under the act.

The land in question was initially transferred to the Navajo Nation as part of a broader land exchange agreement involving the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act. The Resources and Development Committee approved the easements for the project, but the NHLC needed to ratify this approval due to the land's trust status under the settlement act.

"When the land was taken into trust, all financial and administrative decisions regarding its use fell under the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission's jurisdiction," NHLC Chair and legislation sponsor Otto Tso explained. "This ratification affirms that we stand by RDC's decision while ensuring all legal requirements are met."

The Gallup Water Supply Project is a key component of efforts to expand reliable water service to Navajo communities, particularly those affected by relocation and resettlement under the Navajo-Hopi Settlement Agreement. The project will extend water access as far as Ganado and serve families who have relocated along the waterline corridor.

The construction of the project had been progressing, but formal ratification was necessary to secure final approvals. "They have been moving forward with construction, and now with this ratification, we are ensuring everything is legally in place," Tso said. "This step allows for the continued development of critical water infrastructure for our people."

The Navajo-Hopi Land Commission voted six in favor with none opposed. Passing the resolution also reaffirmed that financial benefits generated from this land, including lease payments from entities such as the Navajo Department of Transportation



The Navajo-Hopi Land Commission (NHLC) passed a resolution approving the rights-of-way and temporary construction easements

and other occupants, will be deposited into the Navajo Rehabilitation Trust Fund, which supports Navajo families impacted by the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement.

"This is about more than just a water project," Tso emphasized. "It's about ensuring that the resources tied to these lands continue to benefit the Navajo families they were meant to serve. Our approval today reaffirms our commitment to the well-being of our people."




## UPDATED PUBLIC FORUMS CONFIRMING THE APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF JUSTICE JOANN JAYNE

The 25th Navajo Nation Council's Law and Order Committee will host a series of public forums pertaining to the confirmation of Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne.

These forums provide the public an opportunity to share its feedback, experiences, and insights regarding Chief Justice Jayne's service and leadership.

Please see the attached flyer for location and date information.

<b>3/20 Aneth Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Aneth Chapter House Aneth, UT	<b>4/02 Ramah Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Ramah Chapter, 419 BIA Route 125 Pinehill, NM	<h3>Law and Order Committee</h3> <p><b>Public forum for the confirmation of Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne</b></p> <p><b>Share your feedback and experience</b></p> <p><b>Resolution No. LOCJY-08-13 governs and provides the Hearing Rules on the Evaluation and Performance of Probationary Judges and Justices.</b></p> <p><b>Excerpt from Section XII. Public Notice and Public Testimony</b></p> <p>B. Notice to the public shall clearly indicated that the hearing is open to the public and public testimony is invited in accordance with these rules. Notice shall also specify that anonymous comments will not be accepted. <u>Members of the general public who want to participate in the hearing shall submit written testimony to the Law and Order Committee Chairperson in care of the Legislative Advisor to the Law and Order Committee not less than five working days prior to the hearing.</u> The Legislative Advisor shall provide complete and legible photocopies of the written testimony to the Chief Justice and Probation Judge immediately upon receipt and prior to the hearing.</p> <p>UPDATE: On March 5, 2025, the Law and Order Committee lawfully waived the written testimony requirement from the public.</p>
<b>3/21 Shiprock Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Shiprock District Court, US-64 & U.S. Highway 491 Shiprock, NM	<b>4/03 Dził Yíjiiin Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Dził Yíjiiin District Court Pinon, AZ	
<b>3/24 Tuba City Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Tuba City Judicial District, 240 Main St Bldg 7173 Tuba City, AZ	<b>4/04 Dilkon Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Dilkon District Court, HC 63 Box 787 Winslow, AZ	
<b>3/25 Kayenta Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Kayenta Township 1/4 Mile, US-163, Kayenta, AZ	<b>4/11 Window Rock Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Navajo Nation Council Chamber, Window Rock, AZ	
<b>3/26 Chinle Public Hearing</b> @ 9:00 AM Chinle District Court Court, Chinle, AZ		
<p><b>For more information please contact:</b></p> <p>Legislative Advisor Laureen Spencer Office of the Legislative Services P.O. Box 3390 Window Rock, Arizona Phone No. (928)871-7237 Fax No. (928)871-7259 lspencer@navajo-nsn.gov</p>		

  
25th Navajo Nation Council



## LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE CONCLUDES EASTERN NAVAJO AGENCY PUBLIC FORUMS REGARDING THE CONFIRMATION OF CHIEF JUSTICE JOANN JAYNE

ALAMO, N.M. — The 25th Navajo Nation Council's Law and Order Committee (LOC) concluded recent public forums held in the Eastern Navajo Agency to deliberate the confirmation of Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne. These forums offer the public an opportunity to engage with the proceedings to ensure the integrity and accountability of the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch.

"The Law and Order Committee is dedicated to transparency, education, and public involvement throughout the confirmation process of Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne," said LOC Chairwoman Eugenia Charles-Newton.

The confirmation process follows Navajo Nation Resolution LOCJY-08-13, which sets the guidelines for evaluating probationary judges, including the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and District Judges. This process reflects the Navajo Nation's commitment to self-governance and judicial independence while ensuring that the judiciary remains accountable to the Diné people.

The confirmation process began on March 5 in Crownpoint, N.M., continued March 6 in Tohajiilee, N.M., and concluded on March 7 in Alamo, N.M.

Each forum follows a structured format with presentations made by Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne and Associate Chief Justice Eleanor Shirley. Community members are then invited to provide public testimony, typically limited to five minutes per person.

The forums are open to the public and are announced through official channels, including the Navajo Nation Council's website, Navajo Courts website, Navajo Times, and KTNN Radio.

While public participation is encouraged, anonymous testimony is not accepted, and commentary on pending litigation is prohibited. Allegations of misconduct raised during the forums are referred to the Judicial Conduct Commission or other appropriate authorities, which may pause the evaluation process pending an investigation.

To ensure fairness, the LOC may waive certain procedural requirements, such as the need for written testimony, recognizing that not all community members have access to resources for submitting



LOC Public Hearing in Tohajiilee, NM

written comments. Audio or video recordings and livestreams of the forums are not permitted. Official records of the hearings are kept by the Office of Legislative Services, and transcripts can be requested.

"We are committed to making these proceedings accessible and informative for all our communities, upholding the principles of accountability and Diné sovereignty," said Vice Chair Nathan Notah.

At the conclusion of the public forums, the LOC will decide whether to recommend the Chief Justice for permanent appointment. Recommendation for permanent appointment will be forwarded to the Navajo Nation President for approval, with final confirmation by the Navajo Nation Council.

Additional hearings will take place throughout all Navajo Agencies in March, April, and May.



## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL ADVOCATES FOR NAVAJO LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN UTAH

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – On Thursday, Feb. 6, members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council met with Utah state representatives and senators to advocate for key Navajo Nation priorities, including road infrastructure, voting rights, and protections for American Indian children.

The Utah State legislative session began on Tuesday, January 21. On February 6, the Utah Division of Indian Affairs hosted American Indian Day on the Hill, facilitating important dialogue between the state's Native American tribes and legislators. Council delegates Shaandiin Parrish, Brenda Jesus, and Casey Allen Johnson attended the day's events.

During a meeting with Representative Kay Christofferson, Budget and Finance Committee Chair Shaandiin Parrish emphasized the need for further collaboration with the state to extend the Navajo Mountain Road, which would improve public safety, emergency response times, and stimulate tourism and economic development in southeastern Utah.

The Navajo Nation is seeking an additional \$1 million to complete the \$4 million environmental impact study for the Navajo Mountain Road extension. With much of the funding already secured, the Nation is eager to partner with Utah to bring this project to fruition.

"The Navajo Mountain Road is a long-standing priority for the Navajo Nation. It would reduce the commute from over three hours to just thirty minutes for travel between Oljato and Blanding," said Chair Parrish. "While we are exploring funding options for this road, we are also eager to partner with the state, as this project will benefit both sovereign nations."

The high cost of road projects on the Navajo Nation remains a challenge due to the need to transport materials such as asphalt and gravel from outside the area, rather than utilizing local gravel pits.

"We are working with federal leaders to deregulate mineral rights on trust land, allowing the Nation to access and use gravel located on our land," said Resources and Development Committee Chair Brenda Jesus. "This will lower costs. We need to cut through layers of bureaucracy and advocate for a more streamlined process."

In a discussion with Rep. Jefferson Moss, Chair Jesus voiced the Navajo Nation's opposition to House Bill 300, which proposes amendments to Utah election law requiring voters to return ballots in person and present valid voter identification.

"Many of our tribal members live in rural areas without street addresses, which presents challenges for obtaining valid identification. Our elders also face literacy barriers and often need translations of proposed bills," Chair Jesus said. "As this bill progresses, we must ensure it includes amendments that address the needs of rural constituents and elders."

The delegates also met with Utah Attorney General Derek Brown to advocate for House Bill 30, the Indian Family Preservation Act Amendments. This bill seeks to address jurisdiction over child custody proceedings and the placement of Indian children into Indian homes.



**Left to right: Utah Attorney General Derek Brown met with Council Delegates Shaandiin Parrish, Brenda Jesus, and Casey Allen Johnson to discuss Navajo legislative priorities in Utah.**

"In the Navajo Nation, which spans across Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, Utah is the only state where children are not afforded Indian Child Welfare Act protections. HB30 presents an opportunity for Utah lawmakers to take a stand and demonstrate their commitment to protecting Native American children," said Chair Parrish.

Chair Jesus underscored the importance of HB30 for preserving culture and language, as tribal nations look to their youth to carry on these vital traditions.

"We don't want our children taken away from the Navajo Nation and placed in foster homes outside of our community. We believe in the importance of keeping our families intact, whether that means children staying with their aunts, uncles, or sometimes even grandparents," said Chair Jesus.

Council Delegate Casey Allen Johnson acknowledged that while the Navajo Nation has faced challenges in securing state funding for the Navajo Mountain Road Environmental Impact Statement, the Nation continues to engage with legislators to find common ground and advance priorities that benefit both tribal members and the broader Utah community.

"Beyond tourism and emergency response, the Navajo Mountain Road will also enhance election security. The current detour from Oljato to Blanding forces ballots cast in Utah to travel a three-hour detour through Arizona before reaching polling stations in time to be counted," Delegate Johnson explained.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council expresses gratitude to the Utah state representatives and senators who met with the delegates, as their continued support is essential to advancing priorities that will improve the quality of life for tribal members.



## DELEGATE DR. ANDY NEZ VISITS ARPA FUNDED BATHROOM ADDITION SITE



**25th Navajo Nation Council Delegates participated in an American Indian Religious Freedom Summit panel about protecting sacred ceremonies and medicines.**

Fort Defiance, Ariz. — On Wednesday, January 22, 2025, Delegate Dr. Andy Nez conducted a site visit to the residence of Josephine Belone in the Fort Defiance region. The visit marked a significant milestone in addressing essential bathroom additions within the community, showcasing the successful collaboration of local agencies and the 25th Navajo Nation Council.

"This project exemplifies how ARPA funding is being utilized and meeting critical community needs, especially for rural areas of the Navajo Nation and in our Upper District 18", added Delegate Dr. Andy Nez. He emphasized the importance of continuing the investment toward infrastructure so that it uplifts the lives of our Diné.

The bathroom addition project was by the Navajo Engineering & Construction Authority (NECA), with deriving from Section 11 funds, Delegate Region, per CJA-29-22 through the Department of Community Development (DCD). NECA Supervisor Richard Leonard provided an on-site update, highlighting the progress and technical details of the project.

Additionally, NECA General Supervisor Jeff Jim outlined the challenges and successes encountered during the construction process. "Each hurdle we faced brought us closer to providing this vital resource. It's projects like this that demonstrate the importance of teamwork and commitment," Jim noted.

For Josephine Belone, the project represents a long-awaited improvement to her quality of life. "I am so thankful to the 25th Navajo Nation Council, NTUA

(Navajo Tribal Utility Authority), NECA, and everyone involved for making this possible," she expressed during the visit.

"The day was a step forward in an effort to provide essential resources to our people. Seeing the direct service from these initiatives motivates us to keep pushing to do our best for meaningful change," stated Dr. Nez.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council, in collaboration with various departments and agencies, remains committed to ensuring that ARPA funds are allocated effectively to benefit communities across the Nation.



**Delegate Dr. Andy Nez conducted a site visit to the residence of Josephine Belone in the Fort Defiance region.**





**25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL**

PO BOX 3390, WINDOW ROCK, AZ 86515

PHONE: (928) 871-7160

[WWW.NAVAJONATIONCOUNCIL.ORG](http://WWW.NAVAJONATIONCOUNCIL.ORG)