



Navajo Nation Leaders attend the 27th Annual Arizona Indian Nations & Tribes Legislative Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 13, 2022



PHOTO: Members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council and Vice President Myron Lizer join Speaker of the House Rusty Bowers at Arizona's 27th Annual Indian Nations & Tribes Legislative Day at the state capitol.

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Yesterday, members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council were joined by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer for the 27th Annual Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day hosted by the Arizona State Legislature. The Naabik'iyáti' (NABI) State Task Force members led multiple meetings with Arizona leaders to discuss education priorities, public safety facilities, tribal water rights issues, and infrastructure projects for the Navajo Nation.

Meetings included a discussion with Speaker of the House Rusty Bowers, House Appropriations Committee Chairperson Regina Cobb, Senate Minority Leader Rebecca Rios, Senate Co-Minority Whip Martin Quezada, and Co-Minority Whip Victoria Steele.

“The Navajo Nation continues to meet with Arizona state leaders to share the priorities of the Navajo people, especially during this pandemic. It is important we maintain the government-to-government relationship when making decisions that will impact the future of Arizona's 22 Tribal Nations. State and tribal capital projects must be streamlined so we can plan, develop, and construct new roads, bridges, school buildings, and water infrastructure projects across northern Arizona. We commend the leadership of former State Representative Arlando Teller, former Senator Albert Hale, former Senator Jack Jackson, Sr., and many others before them who were powerful

voices in the Arizona Legislature,” said Council Delegate Carl Slater (Round Rock, Rock Point, Tséché’izí, Lukachukai, Tsaile-Wheatfields).

On Monday, State Senator Theresa Hatathlie (D-Dist. 7) from the Coal Mine Mesa Chapter was officially sworn into office by the Arizona Legislature. She currently serves as the logistics coordinator for the Navajo and Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief Fund and holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Northern Arizona University.

A personal meeting with newly appointed Senator Hatathlie is scheduled for Thursday, alongside Representative Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren (D-Dist. 7), and Rep. Myron Tsosie (D-Dist. 7).

“Western Navajo Chapters are the tourism and commerce hub of the southwest to the Grand Canyon and we welcome millions of visitors each year to our tribal parks like Canyon De Chelly, Monument Valley, Horseshoe Bend, or Antelope Canyon. It is clear the lack of water resources and infrastructure development in many Navajo rural areas is limiting our ability to support businesses and construct new grocery stores, gas stations, or hotels. The pandemic with the closure of the Navajo Generating Station has hit the Navajo Nation hard economically. To recover, we must prepare for future water shortages and uphold the water rights of the Navajo people. That will allow us to thrive and live,” said Council Delegate Paul Begay (Coppermine, K’ai’bii’tó, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake, Bodaway/Gap).

In November, President Joe Biden signed a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill that will provide around \$8 billion to Arizona to upgrade outdated roads, bridges, transit systems, invest in broadband initiatives, and more. With a projected state surplus for additional funding, the Navajo Nation Council advocated for various infrastructure opportunities available for the largest tribe in Arizona.

“The improvement of the Highway 60 project is important to Navajo chapters, along with the \$50 million in funding for Smart Highway Corridors that will install over 500 miles of broadband fiber optic cable throughout rural areas of Arizona and tribal communities. The Navajo Nation is known around the world for our culture, language, and beautiful landscapes. Tourism is a key factor to sustaining the Navajo economy, our small businesses, and making sure dollars stay here on the Navajo Nation. We applaud the leadership of State Representative Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, Representative Myron Tsosie, and Senator Theresa Hatathlie for advocating for our tribal communities as we are working together for the betterment of Arizona,” said Council Delegate Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kinłichii, Steamboat).

Meetings with other senior legislative leaders will include Senate Minority Leader Reginald Bolding Jr., Senate President Karen Fann, Senate Majority Whip Sonny Borrelli, and Chairwoman Leah Peterson of the Arizona Corporation Commission on future tribal broadband initiatives.

“Navajo Nation water rights are a top legislative priority as we protect future water resources of the largest Sovereign Nation in the country. With climate change impacting the world, the Navajo people must be prepared so our communities, livestock, and land do not thirst. This includes support for those who fought for us in all foreign wars, we must address the housing crisis affecting our veterans and their families. Many veterans now serve in underfunded law enforcement positions that need resources and new public safety facilities. The Navajo Nation Council will advocate for our Navajo people who need immediate help the most,” added Madame Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock).

Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint) shared his appreciation for the government-to-government relationship with Arizona. As the Naabik'iyáti' State Task Force chairperson, he added, "We continue to advocate for additional state resources and capital improvement projects to support the well-being of the Navajo people. We remain adamant about how we can improve our relationship with Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico as we defeat the COVID-19 pandemic together. It is important we work with both sides of the aisle to meet the needs of our communities going into this new year. No one should be left behind as we begin to rebuild and construct projects on the Navajo Nation."

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