



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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25th Navajo Nation Council advocates at the Tribal Interior Budget Council meeting



Left to Right: Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton, Council Delegate Nathan Notah, Council Delegate Curtis Yanito, Navajo Nation Speaker, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, Council Delegate Helena Nez Begay and Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Justin Ahasteen

PALA, Calif. – Members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council participated in the quarterly Tribal Interior Budget Council (TIBC) meeting last week on the homelands of the Pala Band of Mission Indians in Pala, Calif., which focused on federal budget priorities related to public safety, education, transportation, natural resources, and others.

The Tribal Interior Budget Council serves as a critical platform for tribal leaders to engage with federal representatives on matters related to budgetary allocations and funding priorities within the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education, and other agencies.

Speaker Crystalyne Curley and Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren led the discussions on behalf of the Navajo Nation, along with Council members who serve on various TIBC subcommittees.

In the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee, Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock) led discussions on enhancing public safety and law enforcement by advocating for increased pay for tribal law enforcement officers, comparable to BIA officers.

“It’s unfair for us as tribal leaders to go home to our police officers and say that BIA officers are going to be paid more than tribal officers. If you’re going to raise BIA officers, then it needs to

be done for our tribal officers who serve their nations,” stated Delegate Charles-Newton. The current budget for FY 2025 allocates \$6,418,000 for criminal investigations and police services. However, concerns have been raised about whether this amount is sufficient to support the tribes that operate their own police forces.

During the Education Subcommittee meeting, Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) spoke about the importance of integrating language revitalization and cultural appreciation into the curriculum at Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools.

“Our test scores to this day show that trauma is still there,” said Delegate Nez, emphasizing the need for additional resources and support to help ensure the academic success of students.

Council Delegates Otto Tso (Tuba City) and Brenda Jesus (St. Michaels and Oak Springs), during the Transportation Subcommittee meeting, stressed the need for partnerships with Indian Health Service and school systems to address transportation issues collaboratively and cost-effectively.

“These roads, constructed 30-40 years ago, have far exceeded their lifespan and with minimal maintenance, they pose significant safety concerns,” stated Delegate Jesus.

Council Delegate Tso highlighted the state and county government’s contribution to road maintenance within Navajo jurisdiction. He also pointed out the effective cost-sharing mechanisms in place, where the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) road maintenance dollars are pooled with county resources.

“In Navajo, we cost-share on specific roads identified as county roads. The county takes responsibility for certain miles, while the Nation uses its road maintenance funds for the remaining segments. This collaboration ensures that the roads are maintained, acknowledging the jurisdiction and ownership responsibilities.”

U.S. Asst. Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland also provided a report to the tribal leaders on the Department of the Interior’s “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative,” launched in 2021 by Secretary Deb Haaland.

According to Asst. Secretary Newland, the initiative is a comprehensive effort to recognize the troubled legacy of past federal Indian boarding school policies with the goal of addressing their intergenerational impact and shedding light on past and present trauma in Indigenous communities.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council’s active participation in the TIBC meetings highlights their commitment to addressing the critical needs of their communities. Through their engagement and advocacy, the Council aims to secure the necessary funding and support for public safety, education, transportation, and other priorities ensuring the well-being and prosperity of the Navajo Nation.

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