



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Naabik'iyáti' Committee calls on President Nygren for immediate action regarding ICE Raids and identification issues



Speaker Curley called for swift action to address ICE raids that have impacted Navajo tribal members.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Naabik'iyáti' Committee today called on the Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren to take urgent action to address concerns about Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, as reported by Navajo citizens and state officials. These raids have sparked significant fear, especially among tribal members in urban areas who face challenges with documentation.

The update was presented by agents from the Navajo Nation Office of Vital Records, Department of Justice, Division of Children and Family Services, and the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission.

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley emphasized the immediate need for the Executive Branch to issue protocols for tribal members living off-reservation. "Our people are reaching out to us directly, and their needs are urgent," said Speaker Curley. "We must act swiftly to ensure their safety and well-being. Our constituents are depending on us for solutions."

Senator Theresa Hatathlie reported virtually on a case in which a Navajo citizen was detained for nine hours, highlighting the need for emergency protocols. She stressed that many tribal members struggle with documentation, which has worsened under the recent ICE sweeps. Despite possessing Certificates of Indian Blood (CIBs) and state-issued IDs, several individuals have been detained or questioned by ICE agents who do not recognize these documents as valid proof of citizenship.

Speaker Curley called for swift action from the Executive Branch, noting previous responses have been insufficient. "When I reached out, the response was inadequate. We need clear records and tracking systems to understand the scope of this issue," she said. "We cannot wait for another incident. We need emergency protocols now."

The Naabik'iyáti' Committee committed to moving forward with emergency legislation to support those impacted by the raids and ensure swift access to identification for Navajo citizens. "It is unacceptable for our people to be detained because their tribal documents are not recognized," Speaker Curley added. "This injustice must end."

Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton highlighted the barriers Navajo citizens face in obtaining state-recognized birth certificates, particularly for those born in traditional settings. This, combined with broader identification challenges, increases their vulnerability. "Our people are afraid to travel, speak out, or interact with law enforcement due to the threat of retaliation," said Delegate Charles-Newton. "This fear must be addressed with systemic solutions."

The committee has proposed measures to enhance the Navajo Nation's identification system to meet federal standards, including remote enrollment systems and resources to issue tribal IDs recognized by federal agencies, such as DOI stamps to affirm their validity.

Pro Tempore Speaker Vince James emphasized the urgency of emergency legislation to facilitate identification issuance and resource access for those impacted by the raids. "We are committed to protecting the rights of every Navajo citizen," he said. "This legislation will prioritize the safety of our people and provide a framework for immediate action."

The committee also stressed the need for collaboration with state and federal governments, as well as other tribal nations, to address the broader implications of these raids. Plans include a toll-free hotline, community outreach to educate citizens on their rights, and legal support for those affected by ICE actions.

Speaker Curley noted that the introduction of emergency legislation during the upcoming Winter Council Session to enhance tribal ID systems and protect Navajo members' rights is a critical priority.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council encourages Navajo tribal members impacted by ICE raids to contact the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Office at (928) 871-7436.

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