



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

Contact: Joshua Lavar Butler, Communications Director

Phone: (928) 871-6384

Cell: (928) 255-2946

Fax: (928) 871-7255

joshualavarbutler@navajo.org

joshualavarbutler@yahoo.com

www.navajonationcouncil.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



A traditional Navajo ground blessing ceremony was held for the new multi-purpose building that will house the Dilkon District Court on April 4 in Dilkon, Ariz. Pictured in left photo is Judge Louise G. Grant thanking the individuals that made the building a reality. In right photo is an architectural rendering of the new court facility. (Photos courtesy of Johnson Smitthipong & Rosamond Associates)

Navajo Judiciary Committee attends Justice Day 2008, ground blessing for new Dilkon court facility

"It seemed like it was endless traveling down to the Arizona state capitol for meetings with key Arizona officials, including Governor Napolitano — but, our efforts have finally paid off." — Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Chair of the Judiciary Committee

DILKON, Ariz. — The Judiciary Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council participated in the traditional Navajo ground blessing ceremony for the new multi-purpose building that will house the Dilkon District Court on April 4.

Event attendees included the Judiciary Committee members of the 21st Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Vice President Ben Shelly, Dilkon court staff, Judge Louise G. Grant, Dilkon chapter officials, Arizona Sen. Albert Hale, Navajo County supervisors, community members, and other local officials.

Judiciary Committee members, Vice President Shelly, and Sen. Hale all expressed their appreciation and support of the local chapter government and the Dilkon court staff for their help in making this project a reality.

Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Many Farms/Round Rock), chair of the Judiciary Committee, said that the day's event "was just the beginning of the committee's duties and responsibilities of implementing a strong judicial service system for the Navajo people."

This building was made possible by a \$2 million appropriation by the state of Arizona through a joint effort by the Judiciary Committee, the legislative, judicial, and the executive branches of the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation has also provided funding to match the state's allocation.

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The facility will help with the community's current needs and its anticipated growth. The state of Arizona also plans to utilize some of the space for state court hearings as well.

The 14,000 square foot facility — designed to reflect Navajo customs — will be constructed on 2.3 acres on the corner just north of milepost 55 along Navajo Route 15.

The purpose of the court facility is to provide judicial services to the people of the Navajo Nation, particularly for residents living in the communities of Dilkon, Indian Wells, Greasewood Springs, Tolani Lake, Birdsprings, Teesto, White Cone, Leupp, and Jeddito on the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation.

"There is endless work that needs to be accomplished and the Dilkon District Court is a prime example of how the Navajo Nation can work in a joint effort with other entities in addressing many issues that the nation faces," Begay said during his address to the event attendees.

Begay thanked Arizona Sen. Albert Hale and Rep. Albert Tom for spearheading this funding request for the state of Arizona. Navajo Nation lobbyist Katosha Nakai of the Lewis & Roca law firm was the liaison between the Navajo Nation and the state of Arizona — including the governor's office.

Begay explained that as chair of the Judiciary Committee, he saw the need for the expansion of judicial services on the Navajo Nation. Through this need, the committee initiated the process to ask for state funding to build the much-needed facility in Dilkon.

"This was a three-year effort," Begay said. "It seemed like it was endless traveling down to the Arizona state capitol for meetings with key Arizona officials, including Governor Napolitano — but, our efforts have finally paid off."

Begay said that many residents near Dilkon have to travel more than a hundred miles to request judicial services, this is because of Dilkon's distance from other tribal court locations on the Navajo Nation.

The current Navajo district courts are experiencing an increase in court cases and the Judiciary Committee initiated this effort for the new Dilkon facility to help alleviate the workload for the other district courts.

"The ultimate aspiration of the Judiciary Committee is to have equitable judicial services for all Navajo people and to have a strong stance in strengthening our Navajo Nation judicial system," Begay added. "The Judiciary Committee's mission is to provide adequate and efficient judicial services to the Navajo Nation."

The building is scheduled to be completed by mid-February 2009. An official groundbreaking ceremony will be held next month.

For more information, contact Joshua Lavar Butler with the Office of the Speaker at 928-871-6384.

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