



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



MacDonald-Lone Tree addresses the issue of methamphetamine and other threatening issues on the Navajo Nation

"Why would these innocent young children lose hope in their own lives? We cannot ignore their cries for help and allow this to continue." — Hope MacDonald-Lone Tree

WASHINGTON — Navajo Council Delegate Hope MacDonald-Lone Tree attended the Health and Human Services 10th Annual Tribal Consultation meeting, where she was invited to give the keynote address to the opening panel on methamphetamine and other threatening issues on the Navajo Nation recently.

In addition to the consultation meeting, MacDonald-Lone Tree (Coalmine Canyon/Toh Nanees Dizi) continued her strong advocacy while participating in the tribal budget consultation meeting and presented several matters of concern to Indian Health Service officials on behalf of the Navajo Nation.

MacDonald-Lone Tree also had the opportunity to consult and advocate with members of Secretary Mike Leavitt's staff with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

MacDonald-Lone Tree explained that following the release of President George W. Bush's budget, congressional oversight committees conduct hearings to determine whether or not the president's budget requests adequately covers necessary programs.

In conveying the need for funding a data collection system, MacDonald-Lone Tree spoke of how behavioral health and public safety officials find it increasingly difficult to meet the challenges of identifying underlying problems without a sophisticated system.

"For instance, our behavioral health counselors are overwhelmed with clients who are attempting to take their own lives," MacDonald-Lone Tree explained as she focused on the alarming suicide rate of the Navajo Nation. "We must assess the core problems in order to make an accurate assessment of reasons why our children cannot find or are not provided with any other alternatives."

"Why would these innocent young children lose hope in their own lives?" MacDonald-Lone Tree added. "We cannot ignore their cries for help and allow this to continue."

According to a report from the U.S. Attorney's office in Arizona, 90 percent of violent crime on the Navajo Nation is alcohol related.

To combat these statistics, MacDonald-Lone Tree would like more concentrated efforts towards the establishment of a residential treatment center. "This is a top priority for Navajo," she told the panel.

"The residential treatment centers will make a significant impact on the lives of individuals who are often sent thousands of miles away," MacDonald-Lone Tree explained. "Many other individuals are unfortunate and are not added to an availability list."

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MacDonald-Lone Tree also expressed the nation's need for additional manpower for emergency medical services, equipment, and vehicles – all of which are greatly under-funded.

“Our emergency medical services make every attempt to fulfill their duties, despite the lack of additional manpower, necessary equipment, and vehicles,” MacDonald Lone Tree concluded.

“Emergency medical technicians and paramedics travel hundreds of miles daily to reach patients in need of emergency medical care — this is a daunting task given that several calls for help may come in at once with one ambulance available.”

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