

**MINUTES  
of the  
SECOND MEETING  
of the  
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**July 31, 2024  
Navajo Technical University  
Hospitality Center  
Lowerpoint Road, State Highway 371  
Crownpoint**

**August 1, 2024  
Tooh Haltsooi Council of Naataanii Chapter House  
Sheep Springs**

**August 2, 2024  
University of New Mexico-Gallup  
Student Services and Technology Center, Room 200  
705 Gurley Avenue  
Gallup**

The second meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Representative D. Wonda Johnson, chair, at 10:17 a.m. on Wednesday, July 31, 2024, at Navajo Technical University (NTU) in Crownpoint.

**Present**

Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Chair  
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Vice Chair  
Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon  
Rep. Anthony Allison  
Rep. John Block  
Rep. Charlotte Little  
Sen. Nancy Rodriguez  
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero  
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr. (7/31, 8/1)

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Harry Garcia (8/1)  
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom (8/1, 8/2)  
Sen. William P. Soules

**Absent**

Rep. Tara Jaramillo  
Sen. Linda M. López  
Sen. Cliff R. Pirtle  
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez  
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Rep. Gail Chasey  
Rep. Derrick J. Lente  
Sen. Brenda G. McKenna  
Sen. Bill B. O'Neill  
Sen. Michael Padilla  
Sen. William E. Sharer  
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

(Attendance dates are noted for members not present for the entire meeting.)

**Staff**

Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)  
Paul Estok, Staff Attorney, LCS  
Sheila Keleher, Researcher, LCS  
Michel Rivera, Legislative Law Intern, LCS

**Guests**

The guest list in the meeting file.

**Handouts**

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

**References to Webcast**

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at [www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov), under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

**Wednesday, July 31 — Navajo Technical University, Crownpoint****Welcome and Introductions (10:21 a.m.)**

Representative Johnson welcomed everyone, and members of the committee, staff and audience introduced themselves.

**Welcome and Status Update (10:31 a.m.)**

Elmer Guy, Ph.D., president, NTU, and Jason Arviso, vice president of operations, NTU, welcomed the committee and discussed initiatives, projects and 2025 legislative priorities. Mr. Guy emphasized the importance of New Mexico tribal colleges being included as eligible entities for funding from the Early Childhood Trust Fund. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=1>.

**Navajo Nation Division of Transportation Update (11:35 a.m.)**

Tom Platero, director, Navajo Nation Division of Transportation, gave an overview and update on road usage, budgets and project priorities, including new road maintenance yards throughout the Navajo Nation in New Mexico. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=2>.

**Public Comment (1:24 p.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

**Committee Discussion: State-Tribal Education Compact Schools Act, Proposed Legislation Sponsored by Senator Shendo (1:42 p.m.)**

Senator Shendo and Kevin Shendo, director, Department of Education, Pueblo of Jemez, discussed the importance of having a school system with tribal sovereignty for the preservation of cultural education and native languages. They reviewed the proposed State-Tribal Education Compact Schools Act, introduced in 2023, and discussed options, as well as obstacles, for creating tribally authorized charter schools. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=3>.

**Update on the Tribal Infrastructure Fund and Capital Outlay Projects (2:42 p.m.)**

Janelle Frederick, deputy secretary, Indian Affairs Department (IAD), and Monica Cordova, administrator, Capital Outlay and Tribal Infrastructure Fund, IAD, reviewed active capital outlay projects, as well as Tribal Infrastructure Fund projects and fiscal year 2024 capital outlay project reversions. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=4>.

**Update from Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority (3:07 p.m.)**

Garrett Silversmith, general manager, Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority (NECA); Ray Smith, deputy general manager, NECA; and Terrill T. Harvey, public relations information officer, NECA, gave an overview of their organization. The NECA provides employment opportunities while focusing on building highways, bridges, water lines and other utility infrastructure projects throughout the Navajo Nation. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=5>.

**Approval of Minutes (3:49 p.m.)**

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the May 30, 2024 meeting.

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 3:49 p.m.

## **Thursday, August 1 — Tooh Haltsooi Council of Naataanii Chapter House, Sheep Springs**

### **Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 10:17 a.m.

### **Welcome and Status Update (10:17 a.m.)**

Louise Charley, vice president, Tooh Haltsooi Council of Naataanii Chapter (NC); Roberta Roberts, director, Tooh Haltsooi Community Center, NC; and Amber Crotty, delegate and New Mexico caucus chair, Navajo Nation Council, welcomed the committee and discussed projects, priorities and concerns. Among the highest priorities are the Navajo-Gallup water lines, broadband access across the Navajo Nation and roads and infrastructure safety improvements.

### **Department of Transportation (DOT) Update (11:41 a.m.)**

Ricky Serna, secretary, DOT, reviewed funding outcomes from the 2024 legislative session, as well as project awards from the Local Governments Road Fund and Transportation Project Fund since 2021. Mr. Serna also discussed the Target Zero initiative, which coordinates all transportation safety work, and the new DOT public dashboard for tracking project appropriations. Javier Martinez, P.E., acting district 5 engineer, DOT, and Lisa Vega, P.E., district 6 engineer, DOT, addressed ongoing and completed construction projects, as well as projects included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and Transportation Asset Management Plan. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=7>.

### **Department of Environment (NMED) and Uranium Mine Cleanup (1:27 p.m.)**

Danielle Gilliam, deputy secretary of operations, NMED, presented an overview of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, along with current programs and projects. Miori Harms, uranium mine reclamation coordinator, NMED, reviewed the former uranium mine and mill sites and discussed the mandates of House Bill 164 (2022). Ms. Harms informed the committee that no money has been appropriated to the Uranium Mining Reclamation Revolving Fund yet. Jonas Armstrong, director, Office of Strategic Initiatives, NMED, addressed the legacy uranium contamination on the Navajo Nation, including the Quiviera Mine waste sites and the proposed Red Rocks waste rock disposal facility.

Following questions and concerns expressed by Representative Allison about the lack of funding in the Uranium Mining Reclamation Revolving Fund, a motion was made by Senator Pinto, seconded by Representative Block and approved without any objections for the committee to draft a letter to the NMED requesting that money be put into the fund as was intended by House Bill 164. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=8>.

**Update from Tse'ii'ahi' (Standing Rock) Chapter House (2:18 p.m.)**

Johnny Johnson, president, Tse'ii'ahi' Chapter, gave an update on ongoing projects, legislative priorities and concerns, with the highest priority being the water line projects that will provide critical and sustainable water supplies for their rural communities. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=9>.

**Public Comment (2:35 p.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 2:52 p.m.

**Tour of Tooh Haltsooi Community Center**

Members of the committee toured the Tooh Haltsooi Community Center.

**Friday, August 2 — University of New Mexico-Gallup (UNM-Gallup)****Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 10:15 a.m.

**Welcome and Status Update (10:15 a.m.)**

Sabrina Ezzell, Ed.D., chancellor, UNM-Gallup, presented an update on student enrollment, which has continued to increase over the past three years. Ms. Ezell discussed a new health careers program starting in the fall 2024 semester in collaboration with the Gallup-McKinley County School District (GMCS) Pathways program. Additional collaborative programs with the GMCS will be added in future years, with a digital media program starting in 2025 and an engineering program starting in 2026. Ms. Ezell also said that in September, UNM-Gallup will be opening the Native American Student Success Center, which will be funded by a grant from the United States Department of Education's Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions program.

**Update from Shiprock Associated Schools, Inc. (SASI) (10:55 a.m.)**

Jonnye Kaibah Begay, Ph.D., superintendent, SASI, and Kerby Johnson, school board president, SASI, outlined strategic goals and priorities for the district, particularly the need for teacher housing. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=11>.

**Navajo Preparatory School Update (11:21 a.m.)**

Darah Tabrum, D. Educational Leadership, associate head of school, Advancement and Outreach, Navajo Preparatory School, and Sherrick Roanhorse, vice president, Board of Trustees, Navajo Preparatory School, presented an overview of the school's history, capital outlay project funding since 2019 and programmatic funding in 2024. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/31/2024&ItemNumber=12>.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.