Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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You MAY BE exempt from many taxes

Theresa Becenti--Aguilar, Chair and District 4 commissioner of the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission, paid a visit to Stagecoach Elementary Oct. 4 as part of her effort to raise awareness about a tax exemption for Native Americans. The tax exemption case was opened on Jan. 31, 2008, by the N.M. Public Regulation Commission. The exemption became effective Dec. 13, 2012.

Speaking to the Sun, Becenti--Aguilar said, “The idea was a lot of Native Americans live on Indian land, and if they have a cellular phone bill, they usually have a plan,” Becenti--Aguilar said. “At the end of the bill, there’s surcharges, like state taxes, municipality taxes, 911 taxes. If they don’t have that type of government on Indian land, why do they have those taxes?”

It applies to every Native American who lives in New Mexico who meets the criteria of living on Indian land.

Becenti--Aguilar works with NMPRC staff and numerous telecom industries to foster broadband communications across the Navajo Nation and northwest New Mexico.

While visiting the Gallup area, she handed out copies of a pamphlet, and expressed appreciation for utility companies like CenturyLink for taking steps to build broadband infrastructure to create economic opportunities and expand access to healthcare and educational resources.

With the exemption in place, Becenti--Aguilar said her job is to go to different communities and make sure families sign up for the tax exemption. She said she handed out about 150 forms during her visit to the Northern Navajo Nation Fair in Shiprock last month.

She said that some may wonder why no one came forward with this tax exemption form before. “A lot of the telephone companies and utility companies don’t let their customers know because they want to continue to make money,” she said. “They want to invest in their business.”

“When you pay surcharges, on average of $15–18 per month, if you multiply that by 12, you’ll see how much you save,” Becenti--Aguilar said. “That’s your money going back into your pocket.”

The tax exemption form is available at nmprc.state.nm.us/utilities/native-tax/index.html.

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