

Nygren, Lundstrom talk key Navajo Nation, N.M. issues

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — To address upcoming issues that could impact Navajos living on the New Mexico side of the Navajo Nation, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren held a meeting with New Mexico State Rep. Patty Lundstrom.

The discussion, on Dec. 19, primarily revolved around the opposition to planned gun bills that were expected to be introduced during an upcoming 30-day special session.

Nygren heard Lundstrom voice potential concerns over proposed gun legislation. Both leaders emphasized the importance of preserving the rights of Navajo citizens while maintaining public safety.

Lundstrom said for citizens living in rural New Mexico, making gun laws that control guns was “a bad thing.”

“People don’t want their guns to be messed with,” Lundstrom said.

The representative said she’s gotten chapter resolutions opposing gun bills in the past. She

added that gun crimes seemed to mostly happen in Albuquerque.

“I’ve never heard of any carjacking ever happening in Gallup or Window Rock,” Lundstrom said.

Nygren suggested the state could develop gun control legislation just for Bernalillo County.

“Most of the stats are from the Albuquerque area, what they’re referencing,” Nygren said. “If they used Bernalillo County gun violence statistics by itself - and what the rates are in rural New Mexico - we could compare them side by side.”

Lundstrom agreed.

During the meeting, Nygren also raised the matter of certifying Navajo police with New Mexico, seeking to enhance law enforcement cooperation between the two entities. The aim is to improve public safety and better serve the Navajo community residing in New Mexico.

But the President highlighted the complexities of sovereignty and which roads were under state or tribal jurisdictions, or how a law enforcement officer would enforce traffic laws, and said to Lundstrom that more discussions were needed.

The President and Lundstrom also had a conversation about the Yazzie/Martinez v. New Mexico case, which focuses on educational equity for Native American students, and how the Navajo Nation could help keep Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital in operation through possible funding.

They discussed how the Navajo Nation could play a pivotal role in supporting the hospital to remain operational, recognizing its significance in providing essential healthcare services to the local population.

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“Our hospital is ready to belly up, the RMCH. They just barely made the payroll. They’re ready to just shut the whole thing down,” Lundstrom said.

Nygren said the hospital could work with the Navajo Nation Council and introduce funding legislation.

As the meeting concluded, both Nygren and Lundstrom agreed their collaborative efforts exemplify a commitment to bridging gaps that foster partnerships between the Navajo Nation and the state of New Mexico.

“I am pleased with the meaningful dialogue we had with Representative Lundstrom. By working together, we can make significant strides in improving healthcare access and quality for the Navajo Nation and surrounding areas. I look forward to continued cooperation in advancing these important initiatives,” Nygren said.

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