



Navajo Nation Council recognizes Veterans Day across the nation



PHOTO: Navajo veterans salute the American flag at the recent opening of the Navajo Blue Travel Plaza in September.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh) and members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council recognized Veterans who served honorably in the United States Armed Forces.

“We, as Navajos, hold a great legacy of warriorship in the world with the sacrifices that our great ancestors, including our own Navajo Code Talkers, made throughout our history,” said Speaker Damon. “Whether it was defending our homeland since time immemorial, or serving alongside our fellow Americans in Korea, Vietnam, the Pacific Theater, Kuwait, Iraq, or any of the conflicts that Navajos proudly answered the call to serve, we stand behind our veterans and their service to our people. We honor those who are among us today and we will continue to work with them and to listen to them in order to ensure that they are supported at home on the great Navajo Nation.”

On Tuesday, following the Council’s special session, Speaker Damon also recognized the veterans working within the Legislative Branch and the Navajo Nation government for their service in the US Armed Forces.

Despite the ongoing coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the Navajo Nation Council has continued its deliberation on key veterans services. Currently, four delegates are among the advocates on the Council calling for increased direct services, a VA health care facility located on the Navajo Nation and more coordination on Navajo veterans benefits.

The Council's own Delegates Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain), Rickie Nez (T'iistsoh Sikaad, Nenahnezad, Upper Fruitland, Tsé Daa K'aan, Newcomb, San Juan), Raymond Smith, Jr. (Klagetoh, Wide Ruins, Houck, Lupton, Nahat'á Dził), and Eugene Tso (Chinle) are US Armed Forces veterans.

The Council has also continued its advocacy for the location of a planned Navajo Code Talker Museum in honor of the sacrifices of the Navajo Code Talkers.

"Veterans Day gives us a lot to reflect upon and be grateful for," said US Army Veteran and Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. "Just as important are our Gold Star and Blue Star families that we pray for daily. The Council continues to give its voice to critical housing issues relating to veterans, as well as infrastructure and access to direct services. It takes a lot to leave the nation to serve, and we want our veterans to know they have the voices of their leaders supporting them when they return."

"Today we recognize the men and women who served with honor and distinction, many of whom are decorated Navajo service members. We have a lot to be thankful for, and today, we give that recognition to our warriors that are with us. We all appreciate our warriors for fighting for freedom because freedom is not free. Thank you, ahéhee," said Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr.

A virtual 2020 Veteran's Day recognition event will take place today, Wednesday, Nov. 11, beginning at 10 a.m. with all three branch chiefs of the Navajo Nation. Delegate Eugene Tso will also give the opening address live, and will take part in the agenda along with First Lady Phefelia Nez, Miss Navajo Shandiin Parrish, Talibah Begay, and a guest speaker. Livestream information will be shared via the Navajo Nation Council's social media sites.

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