



## Navajo Nation Washington Office

Email: [info@nnwo.org](mailto:info@nnwo.org)

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### President Nygren Advocates Legislative Priorities



*President Nygren presents Congressman Schweikert with a Thank You gift for visiting the Navajo Nation.*  
Photo courtesy of NNWO

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Wednesday, President Nygren spent the day on Capitol Hill meeting with key members of Congress to discuss the Navajo Nation's legislative priorities for 2025 as the 119th Congress begins its work.

One of his meetings was with Utah's newest Congressional delegate, Dr. Mike Kennedy, who now represents Utah's 3rd Congressional District—home to all of Diné Bikéyah within the state. After congratulating him on his election, President Nygren and Congressman Kennedy immediately turned to policy discussions, covering RECA (Radiation Exposure Compensation Act), gravel pits, healthcare, and more.

President Nygren reiterated his strong advocacy for Post-71 uranium miners, while Dr. Kennedy, drawing from his experience as a physician, shared the challenges he has seen in his clinic. He noted that many of his Native American patients suffer from various forms of cancer, as well as complications from diabetes—a disease that affects the Diné at nearly five

times the rate of the general U.S. population. He expressed interest in addressing some of the underlying causes of these health disparities during his tenure in Congress.

The discussion also covered land and resource use. President Nygren highlighted the nearly 20-year struggle to establish a small gravel pit to help the Nation maintain its extensive network of dirt roads. He emphasized the need to reduce unnecessary federal restrictions that hinder tribes from using their own lands for self-sufficiency.

Additionally, President Nygren congratulated Dr. Kennedy on his appointment to the House Committee on Natural Resources' Indian and Insular Affairs Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over nearly all federal programs related to Indian Country. He urged the Congressman's support for the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement, which is expected to be introduced in Congress this year.

President Nygren also met with Utah's newly elected Senator John Curtis, who previously represented Utah's 3rd Congressional District for four terms before his successful Senate run in 2024. The Navajo Nation has had a positive working relationship with Senator Curtis, including securing a Congressional earmark for roadway improvement projects in FY25 while he was in the House.

During their meeting, President Nygren provided updates on energy development projects the Nation is pursuing and discussed the challenges posed by the unfinished Navajo Irrigation Project. He explained how the incomplete project has restricted the growth of the Navajo Agricultural Products Industry (NAPI) and emphasized the importance of expanding NAPI to its full potential. President Nygren also sought Senator Curtis's continued support for water rights settlements that will soon be introduced and urged him to remain a strong advocate for RECA reauthorization.

In his final meeting of the day, President Nygren met with Congressman David Schweikert (R-AZ-01) to personally thank him for his visit to the Navajo Nation over Christmas, where he helped haul water and repair a well at a homesite. As a token of appreciation, President Nygren presented the Congressman with a framed photo from the trip and a personal note of thanks.

Maintaining regular communication with Congressional offices and fostering strong relationships with members of Congress is critical to advancing the Navajo Nation's long-term legislative priorities. These relationships also play a vital role in responding to emergencies and urgent needs as they arise. The Navajo Nation remains grateful for the continued support of Congressional delegations from Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, along with their dedicated staff.