Delegate Rickie Nez Advocates for Increased Funding at Consultation with USDA

WASHINGTON — Navajo Nation Council Delegate Rick Nez (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’iiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, and Upper Fruitland) advocated for increased funding for Indian programs in the 2018 farm bill.

Delegate Nez, who chairs the Council’s Resources and Development Committee, attended a U.S. Department of Agriculture two-day farm bill consultation with tribal leaders at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian on May 1 and 2.

The Navajo Nation advocated for increased funding for Indian programs in the farm bill to Secretary Sonny Perdue. The Navajo Nation also underscored the importance of incorporating more local traditional foods into the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

Speaking at the farm bill consultation, Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, outlined relevant tribal provisions he worked to include in the 2018 farm bill enacted into law on December 20, 2018.

Hoeven covered the tribal provisions contained in the 2018 Farm Bill, including increased access to $11.5 million in research grants for Tribal Colleges and Universities, establishing a 638 Self-Determination Pilot Project to promote greater local control over the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, forming the Tribal Advisory Committee within the USDA to help drive tribal agricultural policy within the department, and creating authority for states and Indian Tribes to develop licensing and regulatory procedures for industrial hemp production in their communities.

“We appreciate your involvement in the farm bill. The Navajo Nation has its farm corporation, the Navajo Agriculture Products Industry, that has several products, and it utilizes many of the farm bill programs. The Navajo Nation also has many individual farmers on the Navajo Nation that also utilize those programs,” Delegate Nez stated.

As a local 4-H leader, Delegate Nez told Sen. Hoeven that he encourages youth to engage in farming and to raise cattle, pigs, and sheep. Delegate Nez also highlighted the Navajo beef
program. "Our beef program has the highest quality beef that the Navajo Nation gets into the marketplace. Now we need appropriations to fund all these Indian programs in the farm bill."

Delegate Nez also extended an invitation to Senator Hoeven to visit the Navajo Nation.

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