



Joint Press Release

Navajo Nation Office
of the President and the Vice President
and Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 21, 2016

Jared Touchin (OOS) 928-221-9253
Mihio Manus (OPVP) 928-871-7728

Navajo Nation signs initial agreement to amend gaming compact with the State of Arizona



PHOTO: President Russell Begaye signs an Agreement to Amend the Arizona Gaming Compact and a Memorandum of Agreement along with Speaker LoRenzo Bates at the Arizona State Capitol on Nov. 22, 2016.

PHOENIX, Ariz. — On Monday, President Russell Begaye, Speaker LoRenzo Bates, and Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd, were in attendance at the Arizona State Capitol as leaders from eight Arizona tribes signed a Agreement to Amend the Arizona Gaming Compact and a Memorandum of Agreement with Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey to amend the current gaming compact between the tribes and the state.

Gov. Ducey welcomed leaders from the Navajo Nation, Hualapai Tribe, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Gila River Indian Community, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Tonto Apache Tribe, and the Havasupai Indian Tribe to the Old Senate Room in the Old State Capitol where the tribes and Gov. Ducey signed the Agreement and MOA that will allow the tribes and state to proceed to a second phase of negotiations to finalize an amended gaming compact.

“It’s time for us to modernize this compact to meet the changing needs of the state and to increase the opportunities for tribal gaming,” Gov. Ducey said. “It’s a view that’s been expressed by tribal leaders

over the years, and I agree. The time has come to allow each tribe more freedom in their gaming operations and give every Nation the opportunity to have a seat at the table.”

The Navajo Nation is currently one of 21 Arizona tribes that are part of a compact that was approved in 2002 by Arizona voters through a public referendum known as Proposition 202. On an annual basis, the gaming tribes now contribute over \$100 million to the state of Arizona, which funds education, trauma centers, and other important initiatives throughout the state.

President Begaye was joined by Speaker Bates and Delegate Shepherd at the Old State Capitol as he signed the Agreement and MOA on behalf of the Navajo Nation.

“The Indian gaming industry in Arizona provides \$100 million a year to fund Education, Trauma Centers, Tourism and Wildlife. The new negotiations with Arizona Gov. Ducey will keep more Arizonian dollars here within the state to keep funding these important programs. We appreciate the support of the constituents and citizens of Arizona in supporting Indian gaming because it in turn provides funding to these important services. These new negotiations will keep gaming customers in Arizona rather than sending our gaming dollars to Las Vegas or Laughlin, Nevada,” said President Begaye.

In Oct. 2015, the Navajo Nation Council’s Naabik’iyátí’ Committee established the Arizona Gaming Subcommittee, which consists of members from both the legislative and executive branches, to negotiate the renewal of appropriate amendments to the current gaming compact. Since then, the subcommittee and the Office of the President and Vice President met with other Arizona tribes and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey to initiate discussions to create a framework to guide the negotiations.

On Nov. 10, the Naabik’iyátí’ Committee approved legislation sponsored by Delegate Shepherd to support the agreement to amend the current gaming compact.

“I appreciate Gov. Ducey’s openness and leadership to work with tribal sovereigns as we move toward establishing a modernized compact that benefits both Arizona citizens and the Navajo Nation,” stated Delegate Shepherd who serves as the chair of Arizona Gaming Subcommittee.

Delegate Shepherd explained that the tribes and Gov. Ducey intend to negotiate better compacts for the tribe and the state. The next generation of compacts will improve business for tribal casinos by strengthening tribal exclusivity in regards to tribal gaming rights in the state, to increase the duration of the gaming compact, to expand the scope of Class III games allowed in gaming facilities, and to better streamline gaming regulations with the state.

“I extend my appreciation to Gov. Ducey and his administration, Arizona gaming tribes, Arizona Senator Carlyle Begay, and the Navajo Nation Council’s Arizona Gaming Subcommittee, particularly chairman Alton Joe Shepherd, for bringing us to this point and I look forward to continuing our negotiations in good faith for the benefit of gaming tribes and the entire state of Arizona,” said Speaker Bates.

Other Arizona Gaming Subcommittee members include Council Delegates Otto Tso, Jonathan Hale, Tuchoney Slim, Jr., and Dwight Witherspoon.

The Navajo Nation currently operates a total of four gaming facilities, three of which are located in New Mexico. The Nation operates one Class III facility – Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort – located approximately 24-miles east of the City of Flagstaff.

The tribes and Gov. Ducey’s office are scheduled to begin phase II negotiations on Dec. 8.