



Navajo Nation Council delegate Kenneth Maryboy blessed Senator Edward Kennedy, D—Massachusetts with a Navajo prayer.

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COUNCIL DELEGATES MEET WITH SENATOR TED KENNEDY

Senator supporting fellow Massachusetts Senator
and Presidential hopeful John Kerry

ESPANOLA, N.M. – Council delegate Kenneth Maryboy (Mexican Water/Aneth /Red Mesa) offered a traditional blessing to United States Senator Edward Kennedy and Vanessa Kerry, daughter of Democratic Presidential hopeful John Kerry, after a rally supporting Kerry in Espanola, N.M., January 31, 2004.

Maryboy prayed for the two to have a safe journey as they traveled the campaign trail in New Mexico.

The rally, held in a small building, was attended by hundreds of Kerry supporters. Council delegates George Arthur (Burnham/San Juan/Nenanezad), LoRenzo Bates (Upper Fruitland), Mark Maryboy (Mexican Water/Aneth /Red Mesa), Speaker Lawrence Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) and LaVern Wagner (Pueblo Pintado/Torreon/Whitehorse Lake) were there to learn more about Kerry's position regarding Native Americans.

Speaker Morgan met with Senator Kennedy in Santa Fe before the rally. He and other leaders from the New Mexico Pueblo tribes relayed some of the most pressing concerns among Native Americans to Senator Kennedy.

Speaker Morgan told the Massachusetts Senator that the Navajo Nation remains concerned about the trustee relationship with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He also spoke about health care issues, including the lack of funding the Indian tribes receive for diabetes, though American Indians have alarmingly high rates of the disease.

Speaker Morgan and New Mexico State Senator John Pinto told Senator Kennedy of the need that still exists in Navajo communities for basics such as running water, electricity and paved roads.

"We are normal people, and we have normal needs," Speaker Morgan said. "We'd like to enjoy basic services like everyone else."

Speaker Morgan reminded the Senator that there are thousands of urban Indians who have many of the same interests and issues, including education and health care.

Speaker Morgan and the tribal leaders also spoke about their concerns with Indian sovereignty, government-to-government relations, and lack of adequate funding for Native nations.

"I've talked to John [Kerry], and I know his strong beliefs on it," Senator Kennedy said about Kerry's stance on the sovereign status of Indian nations. "He asked us specifically to pay respect to the Native Americans."

Senator Kennedy distributed papers stating Kerry's position on Native American issues. Kerry says he is the only candidate with a comprehensive agenda to improve the lives of Native Americans.

Kerry's plan includes creating an Office of Native American Affairs in the Small Business Administration, a Native American position in the Department of Homeland Security and an office for Indian energy issues at the Department of Energy.

Governor Ramos Romero said his tribe, the Pueblo of Tesuque, endorses John Kerry for President. Ervin Chavez, San Juan County Commissioner, also attended the meeting.