

To: Jackson Brossy[jbrossy@nnwo.org]
From: Cameron, Scott
Sent: 2017-03-16T22:37:50-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Re: FYI: Navajo Op-Ed in the Hill on NGS
Received: 2017-03-16T22:38:28-04:00

I appreciate your forwarding this, Jackson.

Thanks,
Scott
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On Thu, Mar 16, 2017 at 2:36 PM, Jackson Brossy <jbrossy@nnwo.org> wrote:

From the Hill:

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/energy-environment/324318-washington-must-help-the-navajo-nation-prevent-the>

Washington must help the Navajo Nation prevent the loss of coal jobs

By Russell Begaye, Opinion Contributor - 03/16/17 01:30 PM EDT

The Navajo Nation is made up of strong and resilient people. Our community has overcome great challenges to ensure that we are able to live on our homeland and continue our Navajo traditions.

Now, our nation is faced with an impending economic disaster after the owners of the Navajo Generating Station (NGS), a power plant on Navajo land, have threatened to shut down the facility by 2019. The Navajo Generating Station is the largest coal power plant in the Western United States, and is a critical economic engine for both our reservation and the state of Arizona.

There are over 3,100 direct and indirect jobs with over \$180 million dollars in annual wages that are tied to the NGS and the Kayenta Mine, the sole supplier of coal to the facility. Additionally, a study conducted by Arizona State University found that the NGS provides an economic impact to the region of over \$230 million.

The lease agreements, royalties and other payments tied to the plant and mine accounts for approximately 20 percent of Navajo Nation Annual General Fund revenue. This money funds critical public services for our nation including schools, emergency services, infrastructure, and public parks. We already struggle to make ends meet and any reduction in our already strained operating budget would have disastrous consequences.

The economic struggles facing many of our people are no secret and the sudden closure of this plant will damage an area that already faces an unemployment rate of nearly 50 percent. Closing the NGS in 2019 would have a devastating impact on our nation by immediately eliminating thousands of jobs and dramatically reducing our revenue. We need more time to develop a comprehensive economic transition plan that will allow the Navajo people whose jobs are tied to both the plant and the Kayenta mine to find new jobs in their community while still practicing the Navajo way of life.

Earlier this month I traveled to Washington, D.C. to join the other NGS stakeholders for a meeting at the Department of the Interior and engaged in a helpful discussion about the decision to shut down the plant. We also began a dialog to explore ways to keep the facility open through 2029. The meeting was productive and served as the first step in our efforts to do whatever is possible to delay the decommissioning of the facility.

The NGS currently has the lowest operation cost of any coal power plant in the South West. Keeping the plant open through 2029 would allow our Nation the time needed to develop a strategy to mitigate the economic impact of the plants closure. These additional 10 years would allow thousands of our people to find new jobs, and would give the Navajo Nation the opportunity to identify new revenue streams. We understand that there are stark realities with either choice, but we believe that keeping the plant operational through 2029 represents a fair and equitable compromise for both sides. For over four decades the NGS owners have harnessed the low cost natural resources of our land to power communities and grow economies throughout the South West. It is critical that they work with us now to find a solution that best serves the interests of both their corporations, and our people.

We have been encouraged by the support that Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Rep. Tom O'Halleran (D-Ariz.) have provided to our Nation as we address this challenge. They have served as strong voices in Washington for our people on this critical issue.

We are also optimistic about working with the Trump Administration on this issue given the President's unwavering support for coal jobs and mine workers. President Trump ran on a pledge to "bring back coal" and provide economic opportunities for workers who have been left behind by coal's declining fortunes. President Trump has an excellent opportunity to deliver on this promise by using the bully pulpit to help our people keep this plant open long enough to find new, high paying jobs.

Additionally, President Trump made an excellent choice in selecting Ryan Zinke as the secretary of the Interior. During his time in Congress, Mr. Zinke served as a trusted ally of tribal governments and helped advance critical tribal legislative priorities. He demonstrated a deep respect for our sovereignty and fought to ensure that tribal cultures were respected and

honored. As a congressman, he sponsored legislation supporting Indian coal tax credits and championed Indian coal exports. Given his unique energy background and President Trump's emphasis on public-private partnerships, the NGS has an opportunity to set the tone for national infrastructure in rural America.

As president of the Navajo Nation, I am committed to doing everything in my power to ensure the brightest future for the Navajo people. The challenges facing my people that have resulted from the proposed shutdown of the Navajo Generating Station are grave, but I am confident that working with our allies in Congress and the new Trump Administration, we have a chance develop a commonsense solution to this crisis.

Russell Begaye is the President of the Navajo Nation