



The Navajo Nation

Yideeskáądi Nitsáhákees

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Navajo President Buu Nygren discusses value of sovereignty with federal Homeland Security secretary to have Navajo IDs recognized

WASHINGTON – Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren has brought the single most important doctrine of the Navajo Nation to the attention of the highest civilian federal official whose job it is to protect the security of the United States

In a private meeting Tuesday with Alejandro Mayorkas, secretary of Homeland Security at the Department of Homeland Security, the President asked the secretary to acknowledge and respect Navajo sovereignty in the simplest possible way.

President Nygren asked the secretary to have the federal government acknowledge and sanction the use of Navajo Nation-issued identification cards for voting, travel and other vital activities that require photo identification.

Beginning May 7, 2025, all U.S. citizens will be required to provide REAL ID-compliant identification for air travel and to enter certain federal buildings.

President Nygren explained to Secretary Mayorkas that federal recognition of a Navajo Nation-issued REAL ID, would reduce the burden on Diné citizens

and serve as a key expression of the Navajo Nation's sovereignty.



Navajo President Buu Nygren discussed the importance of tribal sovereignty with Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, and how it is critical to the issuance of Navajo Nation ID cards that are recognized by the coming federal REAL ID-compliant identification program.

“Our ability to issue tribal IDs that are recognized across the country is crucial to our sovereignty,” President Nygren said. “We must ensure that our people can travel, vote and access essential services without unnecessary restrictions placed upon them by outside authorities.”

He said this autonomy would protect the Navajo Nation’s right to issue identification that meets

federal requirements and preserve the Navajo Nation's principle of self-determination.

Recent proposals in Congress that could limit the types of tribal IDs that are accepted for voting purposes places unreasonable and likely illegal limits on tribal sovereignty, President Nygren said. Some of these proposals would require tribal Certificates of Indian Blood, known as a CIB, to indicate place of birth. That would add another layer of complexity for tribal citizens.

The President said he would be able to minimize the impact of restrictive federal regulations and continue to promote and protect Navajo Nation sovereignty through the issuance of its own identification documents.

Secretary Mayorkas expressed interest to work with the Navajo Nation on the President's initiative. He acknowledged the unique challenges that face tribal communities.

He committed to explore how the Department of Homeland Security can support the development and implementation of a Navajo-issued REAL ID-compliant tribal identification program.

The President and secretary also discussed advanced law enforcement training through the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, collaboration with the Transportation Security Administration, or TSA, and U.S. Customs and Immigration Services.

These federal offices could help the Navajo Nation address travel and border matters, and cybersecurity support from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency in order to protect Navajo infrastructure from digital threats.

President Nygren told Secretary Mayorkas of his priority to safeguard and encourage use of the Navajo language, *Diné Bizaad*, which is rapidly diminishing among younger generations.

Secretary Mayorkas, a native Spanish speaker, shared his concern about language loss with the President, and both exchanged ideas on how to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages.



Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren & Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas

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