

Ute Indian Tribe Business Committee Conducts Meetings on Critical Tribal Issues in Washington, D.C.

During the week of February 12, 2024, the Business Committee attended the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Executive Session and met with Members of Congress and Federal Agencies to advance the Ute Indian Tribe's interests in energy development, restoration of Tribal lands, improvements in law enforcement, protecting Tribal jurisdiction, and more.

The Business Committee began the week by attending the State of Indian Nations. The annual address by the President of the National Congress of American Indians noted many achievements obtained for Indian Country over the year, as well as remaining issues. The address also included inspiring speeches by Native Youth and a Congressional reponse.



Business Committee Members attend the State of Indian Nations at the Historic Warner Theater in Washington, D.C.

In addition to NCAI meetings and events, the busy week included meetings with the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA), the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs (ASIA), the Forest Service, and Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS). The Business Committee also met with Representatives John Curtis, Celeste Maloy, Joe Neguse, Vicente Gonzalez, and Guy Reschenthaler to discuss energy development and EPA's proposed Methane Rule.



Business Committee Chairman Julius T. Murray, III, Vice Chairman Christopher Tabbee, Councilman Cleveland Murray, and Councilman Mike Natchees meet with former SSA Commissioner and current Senior Advisor Kilolo Kijakazi as well as SSA Tribal Advisors Richard Litsey and Renee Ferguson

A top priority for the Business Committee is resolving impacts to Supplemental Security Income that a number of elderly and disabled Tribal members receive from SSA. The Business Committee is working to get two federal agencies, BTFA and SSA, to start talking to each other to resolve this issue. The Business Committee continues to encourage members to appeal any SSA denial of benefits or seek waivers of any SSA notice of overpayment until this issue is resolved.



Business Committee Chairman Julius T. Murray, III, Vice Chairman Christopher Tabbee, Councilman Cleveland Murray, and Councilman Mike Natchees meet with Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland

The Business Committee also had meetings with the ASIA, BLM, FWS and Forest Service to seek restoration of Tribal homelands, protection of Tribal jurisdiction, and federal agency cooperation with Tribal land and resource management plans. The Business Committee met with both the ASIA and the BLM Director to seek the restoration of lands within the Uncompahgre Reservation and Tribal management of those lands. At the Forest Service, the Business Committee sought inclusion of Tribal comments and views in management plans for the Ashley National Forest. The Business Committee also asked FWS to complete an agreement for the management of hookless cactus within the Reservation.



Business Committee Chairman Julius T. Murray, III, Vice Chairman Christopher Tabbee, Councilman Cleveland Murray, and Councilman Mike Natchees meet with EPA and Congressional Leaders on Energy Issues

The Business Committee also held meetings with EPA and Members of Congress to discuss the impacts of EPA's proposed methane rules and fees on Indian energy development. The Business Committee met with leaders in EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs to seek their support for additional tribal consultation on the proposed methane rule and to discuss the need for tribal variances under the rule. Like the BLM fracking rule, EPA should allow tribes to set their own rules for methane emissions.



Business Committee Chairman Murray, Vice Chairman Tabbee, Councilman Murray, and Councilman Natchees meet with Congressman Curtis

During meetings with Members of Congress and their staff, the Business Committee proposed amendments to EPA's proposed methane rule that would allow responsible and sustainable oil and gas development to continue while also allowing tribal expertise and decision-making on the proper regulation of methane. The Business Committee asked all of the Members of Congress to recognize that energy development is a critical part of Tribe's economy, the services the Tribe provides its members, and also an important part of the regional, state and national economy.