

Media Release

TO RUN: for event Tuesday, April 26, 2011

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Navajo Nation Historic Event: *President Ben Shelly Signs Executive Order for Commercial Tobacco-free Environments on Navajo Nation*

Window Rock, AZ -- Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly in an historic event **Tuesday, April 26** signed an Executive Order protecting employees and the public on the Navajo Nation from exposure to commercial tobacco smoke in all workplaces and public places.

The primary goal is to improve the health of Navajo people while respecting traditional practices and ceremonies associated with traditional tobacco use. Today President Shelly fulfilled his campaign promise and established a commercial tobacco free environment in all workplaces and public places within the Navajo Nation. Secondhand smoke increases the risk of heart disease, asthma, lung and other cancers, and has been classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a Group A carcinogen. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke and ventilation technology does not ensure protection from secondhand smoke and its health-related illnesses.

The use of commercial tobacco products will be prohibited in indoor public places and workplaces, and within 25 feet of entrances so as to prevent secondhand smoke from entering those areas.

“Each day hundreds if not thousands of Navajo people are involuntarily exposed to chemicals that we know are harmful. It is the duty of the Navajo Nation President to put the health of our people first. This executive order will assure that our people’s health is protected” said Ben Shelly, the President of the Navajo Nation.

“*Every* person on the Navajo Nation has the right to breathe smoke-free air in public and work places,” said Dr. Nez-Henderson. She added, “The Navajo people stand firmly behind President Shelly in their support of a strong tobacco-free policy. A poll conducted in 2009 indicated that **91% of Navajo people support making workplaces free from commercial tobacco use**, with no exemption for casinos. *TEAM Navajo* never stopped fighting for the health of all Navajo people because no workers should be left behind.”

TEAM Navajo is a coalition of health advocates and organizations working to pass strong tobacco-free policy to protect the health of the people of the Navajo Nation for the past four years, taking commercial tobacco out of all workplaces and indoor public places on the Navajo Nation while respecting traditional tobacco use..