THE NAVAJO NATION

WINDOW ROCK, NAVAJO NATION (AZ) 86515

Dr. Buu Nygren
Navajo Nation President

Crystalyne Curley
Speaker of the 25th Navajo Nation Council

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JOINT STATEMENT BY NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT BUU NYGREN & SPEAKER CRYSTALYNE CURLEY OF THE 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

On behalf of the Navajo Nation, we express our disappointment with H.J.R. 26, *Joint Resolution Rejecting Exchange of School and Institutional Trust Lands*, which rejects the exchange of 167,500 acres of federal land outside of the Bears Ears Monument area for 162,500 acres of state land within the Monument. The Utah Trust Lands Administration ("TLA"), formerly known as SITLA, has a statutory duty to evaluate the exchange, TLA determined that because land outside the boundaries of the Monument is more easily developed, the contemplated exchange maximizes revenue to the State of Utah for the support of Utah's school-age children while simultaneously complying with its statutory duty to protect archeological (cultural) resources on state lands.

The Navajo Nation truly believes that contemplated land exchange is in the best interest of all three sovereigns: the United States, the State of Utah and the Navajo Nation. The contemplated land exchange also has the support of the Bears Ears Commission which was re-established by U.S. Proclamation 10285 to ensure that management decisions affecting the Monument reflect the expertise and traditional and historical knowledge of Tribal Nations. What is particularly troubling is that the rejection of the contemplated land exchange is seemingly not based on the merits of the land exchange, but on the separate issue of the development of a co-management plan.

The Navajo Nation is always willing to work with the State of Utah on a sovereign-to-sovereign basis. Rejecting a land exchange that complies with Utah law and is beneficial to both the State of Utah and the Navajo Nation without sovereign-to-sovereign consultation is counterproductive to the sovereign-to-sovereign relationship between the State of Utah and the Navajo Nation.

We urge the Utah Legislature to reject H.J.R. 26 and to work with the Navajo Nation through a sovereign-to-sovereign relationship to jointly identify any true detriments that might result from the contemplated land exchange.

Sincerely,

Dr. Buu Nygren, *President*
THE NAVAJO NATION

Crystalyne Curley, *Speaker*
25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL