



SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 17, 2025

Chairman Baker Addresses the Colorado General Assembly

Southern Ute Indian Reservation – Chairman Melvin J. Baker of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, joined by Chairman Manuel Heart of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, delivered a powerful address before a Joint Session of the Colorado General Assembly yesterday. Chairman Baker’s address marked the third annual address to state legislators since the passage of Senate Bill 22-105, a significant step towards strengthening the relationship between the Colorado Ute Tribes and the State of Colorado.

“In honoring the legacy of our ancestors, past Tribal leaders, and past state legislators, we pledge to continue their work and build a brighter tomorrow for all,” stated Chairman Baker. “Colorado serves as a model for state-tribal relations. This relationship underscores our inherent sovereignty and commitment to collaborative governance. In Colorado, we strive to consult and collaborate for the common good.”

Chairman Baker’s address highlighted the rich history of the Nuuchiu, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and respecting the Tribes’ sovereign rights as outlined in federal treaties. He highlighted the need for continued collaboration and relationship-building based on three core principles:

- **Sovereignty:** Acknowledging and respecting the inherent sovereignty of the Tribes.
- **Consultation:** Meaningful consultation with the Tribes on issues that may impact Tribal interests.
- **Cooperation:** Fostering cooperative partnerships to address shared challenges and opportunities.

This annual address provides a crucial platform for the Tribes to directly engage with state legislators, fostering a deeper understanding of Tribal issues and concerns. In this legislative session, the Tribe’s goal and hope is to build upon the progress made during last year’s session and through the work of the American Indian Affairs Interim Committee. In his address, Chairman Baker outlined the legislative goals of the Tribe which include:

- **Strengthening the State Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA):** Strengthening the ICWA would address recent court decisions that have weakened ICWA protections to ensure ICWA in Colorado is strengthened.
- **Establishing a General Legislative Exclusion for the Reservation:** A general legislative exclusion for the reservation would address the complexities of overlapping jurisdictions (Tribal, federal, and state) and prevents unintended state interference with Tribal sovereignty.
- **Requiring State Recognition of Tribal Court Warrants:** This legislation would require state courts to recognize and honor arrest warrants issued by Tribal courts. This is a critical step to enhance public safety across the Reservation to ensure individuals cannot evade Tribal justice by leaving the Reservation.
- **Passage of the Child Sexual Abuse Accountability Amendment:** This legislation would provide those who have suffered abuse as children the opportunity to confront their abusers and those who facilitated them in state court and enabling the trauma that Native Children has suffered can come to an end.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the State of Colorado share a distinct and enduring partnership. While disagreements may arise, our Tribe remains committed to working together, as formalized through Compacts and memoranda of agreement, and ensuring we always find a path forward. The strength of this partnership enables our government-to-government relationship to address even the most challenging issues with mutual responsibility.

To view Chairman Baker's Address, please use the following link or scan the QR Code:

<https://shorturl.at/bkvyo>



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