



# Indian Health Service Press Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **IHS Director recognizes Navajo Nation President Shelly for public health leadership**

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly is the recipient of an Indian Health Service (IHS) Director's Special Recognition Award for Public Health Leadership for his significant work toward the goal of eliminating the use of commercial tobacco products in public places on the Navajo Reservation. Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, director of the IHS, announced the award at a listening session with the Navajo Nation yesterday in Window Rock, Ariz.

"We are very proud of President Shelly's leadership and vision on this important public health issue," said Dr. Roubideaux. "Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among American Indians and Alaska Natives, making smoking cessation a critical public health goal."

A Surgeon General's report in 2010 called cigarette smoking "the leading preventable cause of disease and deaths in the United States."

On April 26, 2011, Shelly signed an executive order that would ban the use of commercial tobacco products in public places on the Navajo Reservation. The order now is to be considered by the Navajo Nation Council. Shelly also has worked closely with TEAM Navajo, a coalition of health advocates and organizations dedicated to strong tobacco-free policies and to protecting the health of the people of the Navajo Nation. The proposed ban would not affect the use of tobacco in traditional ceremonies.

The Navajo Nation Reservation, the largest reservation in the United States, extends into the states of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, covering about 27,000 square miles. It has a population of over 250,000.

The IHS Director's Awards Ceremony is scheduled for June 29, 2011, in Washington, D.C.



NOTICE TO EDITORS: For additional information on this subject, please contact the IHS public affairs office at 301-443-3593. Additional information about the IHS is available on the IHS website at <http://www.ihs.gov>.

