

## Navajo Nation Adds Cyberbullying Law to Criminal Code

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(TNS) — Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs by way of digital devices like cell phones or computers and it can occur through text messaging or on social media, according to the federal government website [StopBullying.gov](http://StopBullying.gov).

The new law, signed by President Russell Begaye on Sunday, updates the tribe's criminal code by adding cyberbullying to sections that address harassment, stalking and manslaughter as well as sentencing.

Under the new law, tribal courts have jurisdiction over the crime if the electronic communication starts or is received on the reservation.

In addition, the court has jurisdiction over tribal members who allegedly commit the crime, but not if the suspect is a member of another tribe or state jurisdiction has initiated prosecution.

Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty sponsored the bill, which passed during the winter session in January. She said its development and implementation was an effort between the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

Officials are working to modernize tribal law as technology develops and methods for communication increase, she said in a telephone interview today.

Among the next steps are public education, including working with schools on the reservation to have the new law cited in agreements that address technology usage, Crotty said.

Begaye was joined by Speaker LoRenzo Bates and Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne at a signing ceremony on Sunday in Window Rock, Ariz.

Yvonne Kee-Billison, an executive staff assistant for the president's office, said in a press release the tribe experiences high rates of violence but its law had not addressed crimes that occur exclusively or originate online.

"When law enforcement was presented with evidence of harassment via social media or the internet, prosecution could only go so far because of the old laws. Public safety has updated our laws to protect our children," Kee-Billison said.

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