



The 21st Navajo Nation Council
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Intergovernmental Relations Committee approves position statement for air flight tours, tables Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement legislation

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Intergovernmental Relations Committee passed legislation today affirming the Navajo Nation's request for involvement of new air flight standards over the Grand Canyon National Park, including adjacent lands belonging to the Navajo Nation.

Passage of the legislation (Legislation No. 0423-10), sponsored by Jack Colorado (Bodaway-Gap/Cameron/Coppermine), allows the Navajo Nation to issue its position statement to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, the National Park Service and the Federal Aviation Administration.

George Arthur (T'iistoh Bikaad/San Juan/Nenanezad), chairman for the Resources Committee, said the establishment of new air flight standards is significant for developing the former Bennett Freeze area, environmentally and economically.

"If we do not take a position, the National Park Service along with the Federal Aviation Administration will close the doors on us," he said. "There will be an expansion of no flight zones, including the Navajo Nation's own airspace. If we do not have a position statement or response, we will have missed opportunities for development."

Additionally, the position statement requests for a Navajo Exception on the new air flight rules, which would be similar to the Hualapai tribe's exception of air flight rules for the west end of the Grand Canyon. It also authorizes the vice president of the Navajo Nation to execute any and all documents "necessary to effectuate the intent and purpose" of the resolution.

Colorado's piece of legislation goes to President Shirley's desk for concurrence. The legislation passed the final standing committee with two amendments, 8-0. On July 22, the Resources Committee passed the legislation, 7-0.

In other news, the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement legislation (Legislation No. 0422-10), also sponsored by Arthur, was tabled with a vote of 9-0.

Honorable Ervin Keeswood (Tse Daa Kaan) said there was not enough information for the committee to make a decision, as the sponsor and agents to the legislation summarized the 108 page document.

"I do not feel as though we have enough information at this time," Keeswood said. "This committee has yet to thoroughly go through the document. We need to do that."

The water agreement legislation would settle Navajo Nation water rights claims in the lower basin of the Colorado River and Little Colorado River system. On July 22, the Resources Committee unanimously approved this legislation.

As a result of the tabling motion, a committee work session regarding this legislation is tentatively scheduled in the next few weeks before going to the full Council.

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