



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee reaffirms position against the legalization of marijuana

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee considered Legislation No. 0083-15 last week, which would reaffirm the Navajo Nation’s position against the legalization of marijuana production, use, or sale within Navajo land.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) informed HEHSC members that in Dec. 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice released a policy statement which states that Indian Nations now have the authority to “legalize the cultivation or use of marijuana in Indian Country.”

Delegate Yazzie said that a prior legislation garnered several supporting resolutions from Navajo chapters to oppose legalizing marijuana and said their position more than likely remains the same.

“Years from now, I see the Nation utilizing marijuana in the future, but not until law enforcement and our laws are ready for the use of this drug,” said Delegate Yazzie. “Right now we need to reaffirm that the Navajo Nation is going to stand opposed to the legalization of marijuana on the reservation.”

In March 2014, HEHSC passed a resolution to oppose Arizona House Bill 2558, which outlined provisions for the taxation and regulation of marijuana within the State of Arizona and would have permitted individuals 21 years of age or older to consume, purchase, and transport up to an ounce of marijuana. However, the state bill did not pass.

In 2010, the state passed the Arizona Medical Marijuana Act, which only allows marijuana to be used as a prescribed drug medication for physical illnesses and psychological disorders.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’i) expressed concern regarding Navajo veterans who may use medical marijuana for healing purposes, such as physical ailments and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

“[Some] Navajo veterans have been prescribed medical marijuana and are only able to use it on the outside boundaries of the reservation, and they are not able to come back home and use their

medications,” said Delegate Crotty. “We need to make sure that our Veterans have access to these prescriptions.”

Delegate Crotty added that she will make an amendment to the legislation during the upcoming Naabik’iyáti’ Committee meeting for her colleagues to consider, which would be to make an exception that marijuana only be used for medicinal purposes on the Navajo Nation.

Currently, the Navajo Nation prohibits the use of marijuana and criminal penalties can be imposed on individuals who violate the Nation’s drug laws, such as possession of marijuana, production or delivery of marijuana, and delivery of marijuana to minors.

HEHSC members approved Legislation No. 0083-15 with a vote of 3-0. The legislation now moves forward to the Law and Order Committee for consideration. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority on the legislation.

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