



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 22, 2015

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Law and Order Committee recommends approval of funds to assist in completion of facilities for the Judicial Branch

WINDOW ROCK – The Law and Order Committee on Monday, approved two separate legislations seeking funds from the Navajo Nation’s Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance to assist the Judicial Branch in addressing the need for court and administrative facilities after mold and other issues forced several offices to relocate.

At the beginning of December, LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi), sponsored Legislation No. 0401-15 which seeks approval of \$300,000 to complete the construction of new modular buildings that will house the Navajo Nation Supreme Court and Administrative Office of the Courts in Window Rock.

If approved by Council and signed into law, the funds would be used to design the electrical system, installation of a new waterline, added concrete for site access and curbing, asphalt for an access road, and a parking lot for the facility that was purchased by the Judicial Branch.

Delegate Tso also sponsored Legislation No. 0404-15, seeking approximately \$340,000 to renovate and remodel a modular building to be used for court facilities for Dził Yijiin District Court.

According to documents attached to the bill, the existing facility is in need of improvements to allow court hearings to be conducted in the facility to address the district’s growing caseload.

Proposed improvements include the installation of a new roof system, interior renovation, foundation repairs, and grading to improve drainage issues and parking access.

LOC members have received several reports in recent months from judicial officials who stressed the need to address outdated and dilapidated facilities.

According a memo dated Oct. 1, 2015 to Delegate Tso from Administrative Office of the Courts construction manager, VanDerrit Poyer, the Supreme Court has been in dire need of the improvements for over eight years after several office closures due to mold and other issues.

In November, Acting Chief Justice Sloan reported that the Nation’s Peacemaking Program and the Window Rock Office of Probation and Parole Services would be relocated due to mold found in their facilities. On June 18, the Supreme Court’s administrative offices were forced to move after the roof of the facility collapsed.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) asked for the support of his Council colleagues when the legislations are brought to the full Council for consideration.

“The Law and Order Committee is supportive of the legislations and we ask that the full Council support them as well to allow the Judicial Branch and the courts to operate more effectively and to better serve the people,” said Delegate Yazzie.

On Monday, LOC members approved both legislations with a vote of 2-0. Each of the legislations will move forward to the Budget and Finance Committee, Naabik’iyátí’ Committee, and the Navajo Nation Council for final consideration.

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