



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation supports reinstatement of Utah Navajo Trust Fund

WINDOW ROCK – Naabik'yáti' Committee members voted to support Utah Senate Bill 90 on Thursday, which seeks to designate a trustee for the Utah Navajo Trust Fund and create the Dineh Committee.

Prime sponsor of Legislation No. 0050-15 Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) said S.B. 90 would replace the Utah Navajo Royalties Holding Fund with the Utah Navajo Trust Fund, and allow the state of Utah to serve as the trustee, manager, and executor of the funds.

“There are many projects and unmet needs that Utah Navajo’s have faced since the state of Utah resigned as the trustee of the fund in 2008,” said Delegate Filfred.

Delegate Filfred added that when the state of Utah stepped down as the administrator of the funds, many services and projects were put on hold in Navajo communities in Utah aside from scholarship funding, which is the only benefit that the trust presently funds.

The proposed Dineh Committee would advise the state of Utah on which projects to fund on behalf of the seven affected Utah chapters who will benefit from reactivation of the trust fund. The chapters to benefit are: Aneth, Mexican Water, Navajo Mountain (Naa'tsis'áán), Oljato, Dennehotso, Red Mesa, and Teec Nos Pos.

According to the director of the Navajo Utah Commission, Clarence Blackwell, the Navajo Nation receives oil and gas royalties in the Aneth area, also known as Aneth Extension located on Navajo land in the southeastern region of Utah. The Navajo Nation receives 62.5% of the royalties and the state of Utah receives 37.5% on behalf of Utah Navajo’s.

“In 2008, it was frozen. That is a long time and Utah Navajo residents have been waiting to use these funds to help with the needs of their communities. They have been waiting patiently to have these funds reactivated,” said Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Naa'tsis'áán, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin).

The Navajo Utah Commission obtained unanimous support of all seven affected Utah chapters through a resolution and are requesting the state of Utah to resume fiduciary responsibility and management of the proposed Utah Navajo Trust Fund, added Delegate Nez.

Delegate Nez proposed an amendment to include the commission's supporting resolution of S.B. 90 saying it would illustrate to the state of Utah that the Navajo Nation strongly supports the reactivation of the trust fund.

Delegate Nez and Delegate Filfred commended Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) for proposing a challenge to Utah Gov. Gary Herbert to create a cabinet-level position in his administration that would consult directly on Utah Indian affairs, saying it would improve the government-to-government relationship between the state and tribes, especially with issues such as trust funds and land management.

The Naabik'yáti' Committee voted 19-1 to approve Legislation No. 0050-15, and serves as the final authority on the bill.

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