



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

---

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 24, 2015

### MEDIA CONTACTS

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

### **Resources and Development Committee supports the creation of a Diné Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission**

**WINDOW ROCK**— The Resources and Development Committee on Tuesday, unanimously supported Legislation No. 0015-15 with a vote of 3-0. The bill, sponsored by Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock) seeks the establishment of a Diné Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission.

If approved by the Navajo Nation Council, the commission would be tasked with studying and drawing conclusions about the impacts of uranium mining and uranium processing on the Navajo Nation and to use the studies to issue recommendations for policies, laws, and regulations to the president and the council.

“As you know, the Navajo Nation has a history of uranium mining in various areas which includes New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah,” said Delegate Perry. “A lot of these operations happened without any clean-up after the mining.”

The proposed plan of operation states that the president would appoint an executive director to be confirmed by the Council. The commission’s membership would consist of three “technical experts,” seven community members, and one youth member.

Six of the community members would represent six different regions affected by past uranium mining and the seventh member would be selected as an at-large community representative.

Delegate Perry has previously noted that uranium development for military use dating back to the 1940’s, has left over 500 abandoned uranium mines, mills, and processing plants—many near homes and livestock grazing areas which has led to an unspecified number of health issues.

Executive director of the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency Stephen B. Etsitty, joined Delegate Perry before the RDC, and stated that one of the primary goals of the commission will be to consult with community members to gain their input as to how they want to resolve uranium issues within their own communities.

“We feel it’s important to have communities express their voice and have recommendations come forth,” said Etsitty.

Etsitty said that the commission developed as a result of a task force created in 2012 under the Office of the President and Vice President, which met with several entities for an 18-month period to develop ideas to address uranium issues.

During that time period, one of the major challenges was trying to find a balance between western scientific methods and “traditional environmental knowledge” when seeking solutions, according to Etsitty.

“Many of our people are still very in tune to our own ceremonies and own upbringing, and understandings of Diné Bikéyah and how we relate to each other and to our surroundings,” added Etsitty.

Delegate Perry also said that community input is key to solving uranium issues, particularly from Navajo people who live near uranium sites and know the impacts very well.

The legislation now moves forward to the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee for consideration.

On Feb. 17, the Law and Order Committee moved the bill forward with a “Do Pass” recommendation with no amendments. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority.

# # #

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit [www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org) or find us on Facebook and Twitter, search for keywords: Navajo Nation Council