



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Naabík'iyáti' Committee unanimously recommends changes to Arizona Liquor Law Statutes**

**WINDOW ROCK** – On Thursday, the Naabík'iyáti' Committee approved Legislation No. 0017-15, recommending changes pertaining to Title 4 of the Arizona Liquor Law statutes to the Arizona State Legislature.

Since the denial of transfer of two liquor licenses owned by Gary McDonald to close friend, George Ryan, on Jan. 8., the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, the Nahata Dziil Renewal of Hope Task, and Arizona Sen. Carlyle Begay (District 7) have continued to advocate for the inclusion of public input when considering person-to-person transfer of liquor licenses.

“Senator Begay wants to introduce legislation on the Arizona portion, to amend [state] laws based on the problems, concerns, experiences, within the communities of Sanders, Chambers, Nahata Dziil, and their surrounding communities of our chapters,” stated legislation sponsor Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins).

The proposed legislation recommends omitting the “one-mile radius” statute which grants only individuals residing within a one-mile radius of liquor establishments to register as official protestors of a liquor business. The legislation recommends that the “one-mile radius” be expanded to allow for any person to protest.

Leonard Gorman, director of NNHRC, said gathering statements and testimony from local residents was difficult due to the one-mile radius limitation, pointing out that only one resident lives in the one-mile radius of Lee’s Liquor—owned by McDonald.

“The communities were very concerned about why they could not present information about the effects of alcohol in their communities. We need to get rid of the one-mile radius and allow it to have anybody and everybody that is concerned about it speak on the issue,” stated Gorman.

According to 18 U.S. Code 154: Intoxicants dispensed in Indian Country, it states that in Indian Country, where there is allotment land, in which it remains in the trust of the federal government (Trust Lands) no form of liquor should be sold to Native Americans. This is a concern since the communities of Sanders and Chambers are surrounded by allotment lands and trust lands.

Other recommendations state that if the local governing body opposes applications with two-thirds votes or more then the Liquor Board must approve the application with two-thirds votes or more. It also recommends that any person can protest against the liquor license transfer and if not approved, the original owner retains the license, not to the applicant that was issued. Additionally, it recommends to increase the size of the Liquor Board from 7 to 8 members and

that eighth member is to be a member of a Federally Recognized Tribe of more than 40,000 members.

The language in the proposed legislation also states that a liquor license shall be issued after satisfactory showing of the capability, qualifications, and reliability of the applicant and the legislation adds: "the best interest of the community will be substantially served by issuance."

"The purpose of this amendment is to address the fact that we want to talk about everything. We want to go back to location, the trash, the deaths that have occurred because of the use and abuse of alcohol on the roads. Sen. Begay is very concerned about the liquor industry in Arizona and also the United States. He states that we need an issue to present to the Legislature, and that one issue is community concern." stated Gorman.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) stated that although the State of Arizona and counties do not own bars because they are government entities, the Navajo tribe has a government that owns establishments that grant the sale of liquor.

"You talked about how Navajo does not permit the consumption, buying and selling of liquor but Navajo Nation does allow it at their casinos. Just to make a general statement like that may go back and haunt you. Are you trying to keep the the liquor licenses in those locations?" asked Delegate Tsosie.

Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) encouraged the efforts designated by the entities that have advocated for the betterment of Navajo citizens.

"When you become addicted to drugs and alcohol, it becomes our responsibility as leadership to Navajo Nation to provide advocacy and ways to lessen the hardship that can perform on the Navajo Nation citizens. Thank you for your continuance efforts to better our citizens' lives," stated Delegate Chee.

Naabík'iyáti' Committee members unanimously approved Legislation No. 0017-15 with a vote of 20-0.

The legislation now moves forward to the Navajo Nation Council for final approval.

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