



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Law and Order Committee approves legislation to require candidates to satisfy ethics requirements before running for office**

**WINDOW ROCK** – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee approved Legislation No. 0063-15, which seeks to amend the Ethics in Navajo Government Law and the Navajo Nation Election Code.

According to the legislation, it states that candidates who run for “public elective offices should not have any outstanding ethics judgments, including orders for restitution to the Navajo Nation pursuant to the Navajo Ethics in Government Law.”

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) said the legislation would attempt to ensure that candidates running for office do not have outstanding ethics violations before serving in an elected office.

“What this legislation will do is create accountability and close any loopholes. For example, there is over \$667,000 owed to the Navajo Nation by tribal officials and employees,” said Delegate Shepherd.

Delegate Shepherd added that if elected officials are in violation of the Ethics in Government Law, the penalties could include disqualification from an election, and current tribal officials would face the possibility of removal. Other penalties could include administrative fines, civil damages, orders of restitution, criminal punishment, and ineligibility to run for a public office for a period of five years.

In support of the legislation, LOC member Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahi, Whiterock) commended Delegate Shepherd for his attempt to “right the wrongs” of questionable conduct of elected tribal officials.

“This is another step in the right direction for the Navajo Nation. We cannot keep recycling these officials with bad records,” said Delegate Perry.

The legislation also states that if candidates or elected officials owe restitution to the Navajo Nation, it must be paid in full before they are eligible to run for a public office.

Diné/Navajo Grassroots liaison Ed Becenti advocated on behalf of many Navajo grassroots organizations supporting the legislation, saying it is a start to restoring faith in the Navajo government by making tribal officials and employees accountable for their conduct.

“Right now the Diné don’t trust the Navajo government. This is why Navajo people feel like they can violate the law and not pay back anything because they see our tribal officials doing the same thing,” said Becenti. “It is time to begin setting a positive example for our people to follow.”

At the conclusion of the discussion, LOC members voted 3-0 to unanimously pass Legislation No. 0063-15. The legislation moves forward to the Naabik’iyátí’ Committee and the Council.

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