



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Delegates applaud the signing of three Council resolutions passed during Fall Session

WINDOW ROCK – Council members on Monday expressed their appreciation for President Russell Begaye’s approval of three separate Council resolutions that were passed during the Fall Council Session, including Resolution CO-49-15, approving funding from the Navajo Nation’s Land Acquisition Fund to purchase approximately 81-acres of land within the City of Gallup.

The legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) received unanimous approval by the Council on Oct. 21.

The signing of the resolution authorizes the Nation to finalize the purchase of the land, which is currently classified as an Individual Indian Trust Allotment, located east of downtown Gallup.

Delegate Yazzie thanked the individual allotment owner for offering the prime land to the Navajo Nation, which he hopes to be used for the construction of a new Indian Health Service hospital facility. For years, Delegate Yazzie has advocated for funding from the federal government to construct a new facility.

“Our people are in great need of a new hospital in the area and this legislation moves us a step closer in that direction,” stated Delegate Yazzie. “I thank my Council colleagues and President Begaye for their support of this land purchase.”

President Begaye also signed into law Resolution CO-42-15, a legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) which amends Title 7 of the Navajo Nation Code to require the Nation’s Supreme Court Chief Justice to have a Juris Doctor degree.

The previous requirement for the position of Chief Justice stated that applicants who earned a Juris Doctor degree would be preferred, as opposed to requiring applicants to hold a Juris Doctor degree.

“I am pleased to raise the standard for one of the highest positions within our Navajo Nation. This new standard ensures that our Chief Justice will have been exposed to various fields of law in law school. This new higher standard will help move our Nation forward to obtain more self-determination over our own justice system,” stated Delegate Witherspoon. “At some point, the Navajo Nation needs to have authority over all judicial matters, including the seven major crimes that are prosecuted federally on Indian lands.”

President Begaye also signed into law Resolution CO-44-15, sponsored by Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii), which increases the overall membership of the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission from eight to nine regular voting members.

Delegate Phelps who serves as the chair of the NHLC, explained that the increase in membership is necessary to ensure that all chapters within the Former Bennett Freeze Area receive adequate representation when the commission addresses issues related to the impacted communities.

Council approved the legislation during the Fall Council Session with a vote of 17-1.

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