



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives update report regarding Navajo Veterans housing**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Last Wednesday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report from the Navajo Nation Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs regarding the ongoing construction of veterans housing in each Navajo agency.

According to the report, approximately \$4.6 million was allocated for the first year of construction of homes for Navajo veterans—13 homes were built in the Eastern Navajo Agency, 12 homes in Fort Defiance Agency, 12 in the Shiprock Agency, 15 in the Chinle Agency, and 14 homes in the Western Navajo Agency. Construction is ongoing.

The construction of the homes is funded by a 2-percent set-aside from the Navajo Nation General Fund, which is derived from revenues generated on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation Council amended the Veterans Trust Fund to authorize the 2-percent set-aside, and funds are then administered to the DNVA for distribution.

EHSC member Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch' izhi) expressed concerns regarding utility lines that have not been added to the homes while they are being constructed.

“Some [Veterans] are not able to move in because they have no electricity, water lines, or wastewater disposal systems. I want to drop a legislation to get these services to these homes. For the second year of construction, these infrastructure need to be put in their homes. I can't do the legislation by myself,” said Delegate BeGaye.

Delegate BeGaye made a request to the committee to work with the DNVA to gather information from each Navajo agency to determine which homes are in need of infrastructure for their homes, and then he would draft legislation to request supplemental funding for the additional costs.

EHSC vice chair Council Delegate Norman M. Begay (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee) questioned how DNVA determined how many homes to build in each agency, and if additional homes can be constructed in agencies that have a higher need for veteran housing.

DNVA program manager Edsel Pete said that per the legislation passed by Council to allocate the set-aside for the veterans housing, 15 homes will be constructed per agency and has to be equally distributed. He added that Council could amend the law if there is a critical need to do so.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) recommended that the law be amended to also allow for housing options for veterans, such as modular homes and the possibility of outsourcing the construction of the homes to private Navajo contractors.

HEHSC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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