



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Council supports Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act program

WINDOW ROCK – On the third day of the 2016 Navajo Nation Summer Council Session, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved Legislation No. 0211-16, which seeks to amend Navajo Nation Code Title 17 section 2105 regarding the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act in relation to the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, enacted in 2006.

“I am thankful that my colleagues have supported the efforts and initiatives of SORNA. This legislation will allow the SORNA program to move forward,” stated Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins), who sponsored the legislation.

According to NNDPS Sr. Police Officer Pamela Hurley-Vandever, who is the delegated officer to the SORNA program, the program is under the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety and operating in all the seven NNDPS police districts. Each police district has two designated police officers to be part of the task force pursuant to Navajo Nation Code Title 17.

The SORNA program was created to protect the public on the Navajo Nation from convicted sex offenders. Sex offenders, who reside on the Nation, are categorized into Tier I, Tier II, Tier III, based on the severity of their crimes. Tier I sex offenders are required to register for 15 years, Tier II sex offenders are required to register for 25 years, and Tier III sex offenders are required to register for life. NNDPS’s task is to ensure that all convicted sex offenders who reside, work, or attend any schools on the Nation are registered. The Nation currently has 527 sex offenders, added Hurley-Vandever.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) stated that the legislation would improve the program on the Nation and provide federal funding opportunities.

“The Council, Navajo Nation Department of Justice, and NNDPS have worked cooperatively to develop this legislation. This legislation will allow the enforcement to protect our Navajo people, families, and children who are vulnerable. As a member of the Law and Order Committee, we will continue to request for federal funds and resources to implement SORNA policies. The federal government enacted the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, but they have not funded the SORNA program on the Nation,” stated Delegate Begay.

Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat), co-sponsor of the legislation, stated that the priority for the SORNA program is to create a Plan of Operation, which would allow the program to become a unit under NNDPS.

“This legislation clarifies SORNA’s policy and it will allow the opportunity for SORNA to create its own Plan of Operation. The Plan of Operation will recognize the program as a unit under NNDPS, which will be fully operated by the Navajo Nation Chief of Police. Currently, the SORNA program has many misunderstandings and miscommunications with the district office, but the Plan of Operation would eliminate that. Most importantly, it will allow more funding opportunities,” stated Delegate Shepherd.

Legislation No. 0235-16 was officially introduced by Delegate Shepherd on July 20, and will be considered by the Law and Order Committee, which serves as the final authority.

Council members voted 18-0 to pass Legislation No. 0211-16.

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