



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee supports the construction of a Navajo Code Talker national monument

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee unanimously approved Legislation No 0173-16, requesting the U.S. Congress to appropriate funding for the construction of a Navajo Code Talker national monument in Washington, D.C. to recognize their service in combat and for utilizing the Navajo language to aid the U.S. military in World War II.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) said the idea for the national monument stemmed from a veterans meeting in Thoreau, in which Navajo elders who visited Washington, D.C. said they did not see any type of memorial praising the Navajo Code Talkers for their valiant service in World War II.

“It’s within the power of the Congressional people. They come out to our chapters for our support and votes, so this is something they can get behind and support us back in that way. We want to honor our Navajo Code Talkers at the national level to show honor and respect for their efforts in helping the U.S. win the war,” said Delegate Yazzie.

In April 1942, the U.S. Marine Corps recruited 29 Navajo men to be trained as radio operators, and were later coined as Navajo Code Talkers. They developed a code using the Navajo language to communicate military messages in the Pacific, in which approximately 263 terms were created and messages exchanged that only the Code Talkers understood. During the course of the war, the U.S. Marines recruited over 350 Navajo Code Talkers.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch’ izhí) said he supports the legislation and pointed out that there are current requests from veterans stating that they would like an official museum to be constructed within the Navajo Nation to honor the Navajo Code Talkers.

“The [Navajo Code Talkers Association] has talked about having a museum here, so is it better to have a monument here rather than way out there in D.C.? I just wanted to see if there is a way to truly honor them by having a museum within our four sacred mountains,” said Delegate BeGaye.

Delegate BeGaye added that the legislation only mentions the original 29 code talkers and recommended that all the names of the Navajo Code Talkers be added to the bill, and that he would propose that amendment during the next Naabik'iyáti' Committee meeting once the list of names have been compiled.

EHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said that several years ago the Navajo Nation Council donated a motorcycle to the organization to raffle off to raise funds for a Navajo Code Talkers museum.

“The Navajo Code Talkers Association are seeking an allocation from the Council for a proposed museum to be built in Tse Bonito by the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation, however we are not sure what happened to the bike and raffle money. I let them know that could be an issue if they attempt to request money from the Navajo Nation,” said Delegate Hale.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Delegate BeGaye recommended that a letter of support from the Navajo Code Talkers Association be attached to the legislation to ensure that the national monument is an initiative that they support, as well as from other veterans organizations that Navajo Code Talkers may be a part of.

EHSC members voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0173-16, which moves forward to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee for final consideration.

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