



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee continues to push for hiring of Police Chief

WINDOW ROCK – During a special meeting held on Wednesday, the Law and Order Committee received a report from Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety executive director Jesse Delmar, regarding the ongoing effort to hire a police chief – a top priority for Law and Order Committee members.

On June 13, the LOC unanimously approved legislation sponsored by LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), which directed President Russell Begaye and Delmar to hire a police chief no later than July 13.

According to Delmar, NNDPS has recommended two applicants for consideration. The hiring process has been hindered for years due to the lack of qualified applicants that did not meet the minimum qualifications and also due to the non-competitive salary when compared to federal, county, and other tribal police chief salaries.

“This is a historic event for the Navajo Nation. The Nation has waited many years to have a police chief. Hiring a police chief is one of the top priorities for LOC and NNDPS. I am happy it is finally being resolved. Now, we can move forward with other NNDPS priorities,” stated LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi).

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) said that whoever is hired to serve as the police chief will need guidance to address public safety issues and concerns throughout the Navajo Nation.

“The next goals are to address all the public safety concerns. The police chief will need the committee’s and NNDPS’s help to address all the obstacles. We need to start advocating for additional [federal] funding, a better retirement package for police officers, and salary increases for police officers,” stated Delegate Begay.

The Navajo Nation has the highest crime rates and the chief of police will provide assistance and recommendations to prevent and decrease crime, added Delmar.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) said the police chief position is deserving of a higher salary due to the overall size of

the Navajo Nation's landscape, while drawing comparisons to police chief salaries outside of the Navajo Nation.

"We need to develop strategies on how to increase the salary for our police chief. The Navajo police chief will be paid in the amount of \$80,000 a year to be responsible for more than 27,000 square miles of land. I don't know of any police chief in the United States that is responsible for or close to 27,000 square miles. For example, city police chiefs get paid more than \$100,000 a year to take care of less than 1,000 square miles," stated Delegate Smith.

According to Delmar, NNDPS is considering solutions to address the workload of the police chief position, in addition to discussing pay raises with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Navajo Nation consists of seven police districts and NNDPS has begun considering the creation of seven police chief positions to serve at each district.

On Monday, the two applicants completed interviews with the NNDPS interview panel, which consisted of county sheriffs and agency police commanders. The police chief selection will be announced once the interview panel makes a selection.

The Law and Order Committed accepted the report from NNDPS with a 2-0 vote.

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