



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) 637-3647
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Law and Order Committee receives report from Navajo Division of Public Safety regarding initiatives of public safety

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee received a report from Jesse Delmar, the Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety regarding recent activities and initiatives.

The report focused on the financial needs of the division. DPS is currently seeking grants from the federal government to address the financial barriers of the Navajo Nation justice system. Currently, the Navajo Nation is operating with 220 police officers, 35 criminal investigators, and limited correctional officers.

Delmar said DPS plans to discuss the lack of police officers and criminal investigators next week in Washington, D.C., at the Tribal Interior Budget Council meeting.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) stated that there is a lack of operating funds, staff, correctional officers, and police officers at each of the newly constructed correctional facilities in Tuba City, Kayenta, Crownpoint, Ramah, and Chinle.

“The Nation doesn’t solely have the man power to operate these facilities. Are these correctional facilities feasible and where are we going to get additional funding for these facilities when we need police officers in the field?” asked Delegate Smith.

Delmar also reported on the mental health concerns with police officers. According to DPS, some police officers are emotionally and psychologically damaged caused by on-duty traumatic incidents. Therefore, DPS is searching for institutions and resources to address mental health, counseling, and immediate interventions for law enforcements officers.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) expressed the need for strong advocacy for the safety and health issues of Navajo police officers.

“Our police officers are in need of mental health assistance. Also, we need to address pay raises and better retirement benefits for our police officers. We need to take care of them. I would gladly work on this issue when DPS provides recommendations,” said Delegate Begay.

Other concerns provided in the report focused on improving public safety along border town communities, hiring a qualified chief of police, the on-going Emergency 9-1-1 system initiative, and the current proposals to revise the 638 Contract with the Bureau of Indian Affairs regarding public safety.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) recommended scheduling a strategic meeting with DPS to have in depth discussions on the Tribal Law and Order Act, and review the DPS priority listing.

LOC members voted 3-0 to accept report along with one directive to hold a strategic meeting with DPS on March 24.

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