



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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

### **Health, Education, and Human Services Committee seeks to expedite the hiring process for chief of police position**

**WINDOW ROCK** – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report from Law and Order Committee members regarding issues in attempting to hire a chief of police for the Navajo Nation Police Department.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) said there are about seven applicants who applied for the position. Four of the candidates have a bachelor's degree, but lack law enforcement experience by approximately two years.

“We don't want to go through another incident like what happened in Shiprock. We don't want to go through that again. Really, the direction of the police department is hurting,” said Delegate Yazzie. “They are well qualified and young. They are the go-getters, not individuals that are ready to retire, but people we can invest in for the long run.”

Delegate Yazzie indicated that the issue with hiring a chief of police stems from the Equivalency Clause in the Navajo Nation Personnel Policy Manual. He said that some of the candidates possess a bachelor's degree, but lacked years of experience, which has hindered the hiring process due to position classification issues.

According to the policy, it defines the Equivalency Clause as the “use of an academic degree to substitute for a minimum number of years of work experience, or the use of a number of years of work experience to substitute for a required academic degree.”

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said that the clause in the policy did not need to be changed, however, the Personnel Classification Qualifications can be amended by the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety to accommodate the hiring for a chief of police.

“The [hiring] is the issue for the position for a chief of police, but amending the Equivalency Clause could undo everything for the entire employee positions on the Navajo Nation,” said Delegate Hale.

Delegate Hale recommended that the NNDPS program amend the PCQ's by requiring a bachelor's degree and changing the years of experience to increase the pool of eligible applicants applying for the chief of police position.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé a'náoz't'l'í) suggested a directive to have the Navajo Nation Office of Legislative Counsel develop legislation to amend the hiring process that would exempt the chief of police position from the Equivalency Clause.

"The directive will only apply to the chief of police position, but in the near future our committee should begin looking into issues concerning the hiring process, position classification, and salary scales," said Delegate Crotty.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to approve the directive.

Delegate Yazzie thanked HEHSC members and said the proposed legislation would allow NNDPS to hire a chief of police as soon as possible.

"I want to thank the HEHSC members for their support in aiding the LOC and the NNDPS in hiring a police chief as soon as possible. The police department has been without a chief for too long and it is time that we hire someone who will provide direction and guidance to our officers," said Delegate Yazzie.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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