



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation Council approves \$2 million for summer youth employment and enrichment programs

WINDOW ROCK – During a special session held on Friday, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council unanimously passed Legislation No. 0148-16, approving supplemental funding in the amount of \$2 million from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for summer youth employment and youth enrichment programs for Navajo high school students and college students.

If signed into law, legislation sponsor Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) said the funding would benefit Navajo youth in each of the Navajo Nation's 110 chapters by providing employment opportunities.

Delegate Damon also addressed concerns that may arise over the impact of the \$2 million on the expected budget shortfall for FY2016 and FY2017. He asked his Council colleagues to recall that the Council approved the \$150 million Permanent Trust Fund income expenditure plan in April, which provides funding for water projects and economic development projects. The expenditure plan also stipulated that any remaining funds would be returned to the Nation's General Funds to cover the budget shortfalls.

"The shortfalls will hit us, but it will be covered by the five-year plan," said Delegate Damon.

Over the course of a four-hour discussion, the Council approved a total of seven amendments including one that directs the Office of the Controller, Office of Management and Budget, and the Division of Community Development to expedite the allocation of the funds to chapters within five days, pending the President's consideration of the resolution.

The amendment was proposed by Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), who said he was concerned that the funding might not reach the chapters in time for summer, considering that many schools have already ended their school year.

Another amendment proposed by Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí', Steamboat), added language to allow the funds to be used for youth enrichment programs.

Delegate Shepherd said the amendment would provide positive opportunities for youth to learn life skills instead of performing menial tasks at chapter houses. In addition, Council passed an amendment to establish or implement guidelines and policies by chapter resolution prior to the expenditure of the funds for enrichment programs.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) raised concerns over how the funds might be used once it reaches the chapters, adding that he did not want to see the funds used for other purposes such as travel expenses for chapter officials.

The Council approved an amendment proposed by Delegate Tsosie prohibiting chapters from utilizing the funds for any other purpose other than summer student employment and student enrichment initiatives.

Delegate Damon urged President Russell Begaye to sign the resolution into law to provide income for students to help with tuition, purchasing books, and other educational expenses.

“If President Begaye signs this into law he will not only help our youth, but he will also uphold one of the four pillars of his administration by supporting Navajo youth,” stated Delegate Damon.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Council voted 17-0 to approve the bill. The resolution was delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President on Friday. President Russell Begaye has ten calendar days to consider the resolution.

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