



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Navajo Nation Council votes to amend the Navajo Nation's Comprehensive Budget to benefit elders, grazing officials, chapters**

**WINDOW ROCK** – During a special session held on Thursday, the Navajo Nation Council voted 19-0 to approve Legislation No. 0393-16, amending the Navajo Nation's fiscal year 2017 Comprehensive Budget to provide an additional \$7.7 million for vital programs that will benefit Navajo senior citizens, the 110 chapters, grazing officials, the Department of Diné Education, and others. The Navajo Nation's fiscal year 2017 began at the start of October and ends at the end of September 2017.

The Council approved the Nation's Comprehensive Budget on Sept. 8, however, the presidential line item veto authority was used to eliminate approximately \$8.3 million for the Nation's 110 chapters, Navajo Area Agency on Aging, district grazing officials, the Judicial Branch, Department of Diné Education, and several other vital programs and initiatives. The \$8.3 million that was line item vetoed then became unallocated funding.

On Nov. 6, Council members met with President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez to discuss budget items. After several hours of discussion, the Nation's leadership reached an understanding that would allow the Comprehensive Budget to be amended.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), explained that the overall amount requested in the legislation is lower than the \$8.3 million that was initially approved by Council because the first month of the new fiscal year has passed, which reduced the amount needed for the remainder of the fiscal year.

During Thursday's discussion, Council members approved six amendments including one proposed by Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreón, Whitehorse Lake) that reinstated a total of 18 Conditions of Appropriations for various programs and divisions. The Budget and Finance Committee had removed the COA's when the legislation came before the committee on Tuesday, however, Council members voted 12-7 to reinstate the COA's during the special session.

Delegate Tsosie and Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said the COA's are important to holding programs and staff accountable and to ensure that progress is made for benefit of the Navajo people.

Another amendment proposed by Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels), instructs programs and divisions that laid off employees due to the line item vetoes to rehire those employees in the same positions, in accordance with the Section 15 of the Navajo Nation's Personnel Policy Manual.

Delegate Damon urged Office of the President and Vice President chief of staff Arbin Mitchell to ask President Begaye to act on the resolution as quickly as possible so that individuals who were laid off due to the line item vetoes may return to work as soon as possible.

"Please ask the president not to sit on this for 10 days because there are families and people out there that need to return to work especially with the holidays coming up," said Delegate Damon.

Among the budget items included in the \$7.7 million is funding for the 110 chapters, funding to restore working hours for employees of Navajo Area Agency on Aging to benefit Navajo senior citizens, the Judicial Branch, district grazing officials, and for the Department of Diné Education for immersion programs.

At the conclusion of Thursday's discussion, Council members voted 19-0 to approve Legislation No. 0393-16. President Begaye will have ten calendar days to consider the resolution once it is delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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