



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council approves the Navajo Nation's 2017 Comprehensive Budget

WINDOW ROCK – Over the course of three days, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council considered the Fiscal Year 2017 Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget, which was approved on Thursday with a total of 21 amendments and 20 Conditions of Appropriations. The total approved budget totals approximately \$626.4 million.

The Comprehensive Budget is derived from funds from the Navajo Nation General Fund, Indirect Cost Fund, higher education set asides, external funds cash match, Proprietary Fund, Fiduciary Fund, Internal Special Revenue Fund, and External Special Revenue Funds.

According to Legislation No. 0291-16, the approximate allocation of funds to the Executive Branch is \$565.6 million, the Legislative Branch at \$15.3 million, the Judicial Branch at \$14.6 million, fixed costs at \$27.1 million, and capital projects at \$3.8 million.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), who also chairs the Budget and Finance Committee, thanked Council colleagues for passing the FY2017 Comprehensive Budget.

“For the first time we are providing more funding to the Navajo Nation scholarship program that will fund an additional 946 students,” said Delegate Damon. “And for the Navajo Area Agency on Aging, the individuals that marched here to the Council Chamber—the Navajo grandparents and the elderly—we heard their voices and we fully funded what they asked us for.”

Delegate Damon proposed an amendment on Tuesday to allocate approximately \$1.4 million from the Navajo Nation Office of the Controller's \$12 million set aside, which is derived from the Permanent Trust Fund interest income, to NAAA, which reduced the Controller's set aside amount to \$10.6 million. Council members voted 14-5 to approve the amendment.

Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi Tó'ii) proposed an amendment to allocate approximately \$3 million from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the form of a grant to aid in bringing 36 new homes to the Former Bennett Freeze Area.

“This grant money would be a matching grant and for the 36 housing units that have already been purchased. What this money does is it will be used to build the foundations and complete all the

site work that needs to be done for the homes, such as archeological clearances and environmental assessments,” said Delegate Phelps.

He added that it would also fund home repairs and renovations for existing homes throughout the FBFA. Council members voted 16-4 to approve the amendment.

Other key amendments that were approved include:

- Allocating \$1,020,000 from the Navajo Nation Retirement Benefit Plan to the 110 Navajo Chapters using the 50/50 formula to cover any potential shortfalls.
- Allocating \$752,401 from the Navajo Nation Personnel Lapse Fund to fulfill the unmet needs of the Judicial Branch budget to be utilized for contractual services, supplies, special transactions, repair and maintenance, travel, lease and rental, and other operational needs.
- Allocating \$840,000 from the Navajo Nation Department of Air Transportation fixed cost account to aid in implementing a comprehensive Amber Alert system, to fund the rural addressing project, and to hire a criminal investigator/coroner consultant who would only investigate major crimes such as sexual assault, murder, child abuse, etc.

Delegate Damon added that the FY2017 Comprehensive Budget included additional funding for the Navajo Nation Police Department for ammunition, training, and uniforms. Other additional funding included 35 new earth dams to be built throughout the Nation, the creation of a new professional salary pay scale, and to implement Diné language and cultural immersion programs throughout Navajo schools.

“This is an excellent budget we put together and I thank the Council for everything they set forth and brought to the table in the last three days,” said Delegate Damon.

Council members voted 19-1 to approve the FY2017 Comprehensive Budget. President Russell Begaye will have 10 calendar days to consider the budget once the resolution is sent to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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