



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee reinstates Equivalency Clause

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee approved Legislation No. 0078-15, which reinstates the Equivalency Clause into the Navajo Nation Personnel Policy Manual.

According to the legislation, the reinstatement of the Equivalency Clause establishes “minimum qualifications for a position, whether a certain number of years of experience, a specific educational requirement, or both, for qualification assessment,” and to seek the best qualified candidates for hiring.

On March 25, 2015, the HEHSC considered Legislation No. 0078-15 and was ruled out of order due to inaccurate language in the bill, and a directive was made to correct the errors and to re-draft the legislation.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) issued a letter on Sept. 12 stating that the legislation was corrected and was legally sufficient to be considered by the committee.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Benjamin L. Bennett (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) said the elimination of the Equivalency Clause caused delays in hiring for numerous employment positions throughout the Navajo Nation, with nearly 200 vacancies still needing to be filled.

“When the clause was taken out, it was done with good intentions to attract recent college graduates, but it has been two years now and there has not been a significant hiring of those individuals nor are they coming back to work for the Navajo Nation,” said Delegate Bennett. “So there is a need to begin hiring Navajo people who have the experience and need the jobs.”

He added that filling the vacancies would increase monetary contributions to the Navajo Nation Retirement Plan, which has had recent issues with funding shortfalls, and aid in decreasing the 75-percent unemployment rate on the Nation.

In Dec. 2013, the HEHSC eliminated the Equivalency Clause from the personnel policy, in which amendments were intended to address concerns over recent college graduates who were unable to obtain employment with the Navajo Nation due to being overqualified or lacking experience, however, many had the necessary degree or certificate requirements to be considered for employment.

In support of the legislation, HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'í'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz't'í'í) said there is a vast need to fill vacancies throughout the Navajo Nation to ensure that Navajo citizens receive direct services.

“The large number of vacancies directly effects the services we provide to Diné citizens and as leaders, it is our responsibility to make policy changes when we see a need. In addition to ensuring direct services, reinstating the Equivalency Clause will allow our Navajo people to fill those vacancies and provide them with employment that many desperately seek,” said Delegate Crotty.

HEHSC members voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0078-15, and the committee serves as final authority on the bill.

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