



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee supports the replacement of 24 homes destroyed in the Assayi Lake wildfire

CHURCHROCK, N.M. – Last week, the Resources and Development Committee considered Legislation No. 0447-17, which seeks to approve supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of \$764,000 to the Naschitti Community Governance to aid in the replacement of homes destroyed in the Assayi Lake wildfire. In June 2014, the Assayi Lake wildfire burned approximately 11,000-acres including shelters and livestock quarters.

The funding for the homes was approved by the Council in September as part of the fiscal year 2018 comprehensive budget; however, President Russell Begaye used the presidential line-item veto authority to deny the funds.

Legislation sponsor, Council Delegate Steven Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a'), who represents numerous families whose homes were destroyed, asked for the committee's support to rebuild 24-homes.

"The Nation needs to assist and restore the families' way of life, which they lost during the wildfire. I've consulted with 24-families that requested for assistance to rebuild their homes," added Delegate Begay.

RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) raised concerns regarding the funding request for livestock feed due to the loss of grazing lands, which was included in the original bill.

"As I look at the budget forms, it includes feed for livestock. How will that be factored into building the homes?" asked Delegate Phelps.

According to Delegate Begay, the legislation would be amended to only request funding for the 24-homes.

"The funding request would only cover housing supplies and construction costs, excluding livestock feed. The families only want their homes back. The families did not request for electric lines, plumbing systems, or big houses too. They simply need help to rebuild their livelihoods in the Chuska Mountains," said Delegate Begay.

During the discussion, two amendments were approved including omitting the funding request for livestock feed and to reduce the number of homes from 27 to 24, which included a directive to update the budget forms with correct costs.

Delegate Phelps recommended that the Naschitti Community Governance provide a plan and timeline to utilize the supplemental funding before the Navajo Nation Council considers the legislation.

The Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0447-17 with a vote of 4-0. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority for the bill.

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