



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 2018

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Navajo Nation Council votes in support of investing \$58 million in settlement dollars into the Síhasin Fund

WINDOW ROCK – On the second day of the Spring Council Session, the Navajo Nation Council voted 12-7 in support of Legislation No. 0042-17, which was sponsored by Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) and designates \$58.4 million in settlement funds to be deposited into the Navajo Nation's Síhasin Fund.

The funds were awarded to the Navajo Nation as a result of the Ramah Navajo Chapter v. Jewell case filed in 1990 against the U.S. Department of the Interior over the federal government's failure to pay full contract support costs to tribes and their organizations that were contracted to operate Bureau of Indian Affairs programs.

Following the Council's approval, Delegate Phelps thanked his Council colleagues for their support and described how the bill will benefit the Nation.

"I'm grateful to my colleagues' firm resolve in effectively moving the proceeds from the Ramah Settlement funds into the Síhasin account. The Síhasin Fund is established for the purpose of supporting viable and much needed economic development, community development, infrastructure projects, and educational initiatives promising positive benefit for our people. Depositing funds back into the Síhasin account makes it possible for us to continue making worthy investments and create jobs in our communities," Delegate Phelps stated.

The Síhasin Fund was created by the Council in 2014, when the Navajo Nation received \$554 million from the federal government as part of a separate settlement agreement related to litigation over the historical mismanagement of the Navajo Nation's trust assets. The settlement funds were deposited in the Síhasin Fund in order to earn interest and to grow the balance.

Additionally, the Council established the Síhasin Fund Subcommittee, which is tasked with developing expenditure plans to utilize and leverage the funds to address critical needs, which includes infrastructure development, community development, and economic development, and educational opportunities.

According to a report from the Office of the Controller dated April 13, 2018, the current un-appropriated balance in the Síhasin Fund is approximately \$381 million as of Feb. 28, 2018. Based

on previous reports provided by the Controller's Office, the Síhasin Fund balance continues to grow steadily from the earned interest.

A separate bill, Legislation No. 0055-17, which sought to establish the "Navajo Nation Public Safety System Fund" in order to invest the \$58.3 million settlement funds for public safety purposes was also on the approved agenda for the Spring Council Session. The legislation was previously referred back to the Naabik'íyáti' Committee on April 20, 2017, but did not receive enough votes on Tuesday to be reconsidered by the Council.

The Navajo Nation Council voted 12-7 to approve Legislation No. 0042-17.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council