



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Funds for veteran services and chapter officials approved by Council

WINDOW ROCK – The 23rd Navajo Nation Council on Wednesday, approved two separate bills to provide funding for services for Navajo veterans and to provide compensation for chapter officials. The funding approvals require consideration by the President of the Navajo Nation.

The Council votes 18-0 to approve Legislation No. 0149-18, which seeks \$1.2 million for the Navajo Veterans Administration to assist veterans with emergency assistance requests, energy assistance, burial assistance, and weatherization assistance.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi) said the funding request is greatly needed to help Navajo veterans. He also noted that in May, the Council approved a supplemental funding request for \$1,094,784 for the Nation's five veteran agency organizations, however, the Nation's Controller has declined to release the funding due to concerns with the resolution that was passed and signed by the President.

Navajo Veterans Administration acting director Ryan Sandoval, who also serves as the Fort Defiance Agency Veterans Organization Vice Commander, joined Delegate Tso in requesting the Council's support for the funding request to help veterans and their spouses. He stated that there is a "tremendous need" to help veterans across the Navajo Nation.

If the President approves the resolution, the \$1.2 million will be allocated to the central Navajo Veterans Administration office to be distributed for the benefit of Navajo veterans.

The Council on Wednesday also voted in support of Legislation No. 0194-18, to provide \$1,021,431 to the Division of Community Development for stipends to compensate chapter officials for their services.

The majority of Council's discussion centered on a directive proposed by Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) to require all chapters to develop and submit emergency management plans to the Division of Community Development within 30-days, in accordance with a resolution RDCMY-47-17 passed by the Resources and Development Committee in May 2017 that directed all chapters to do so.

Delegate Yazzie said many chapters have not complied with the request. He added that although the directive was not passed, there remains a great need for chapters to be prepared in the event of emergencies such as flooding, wildfires, and other emergency situations.

The Council also approved an amendment that allows chapters to reimburse other accounts that were legally used to fund the stipends. It also requires the Division of Community Development to verify whether the use of such accounts was allowed previously.

At the conclusion of debate, the Council approved \$1,021,431 for the 110 chapters with one amendment. The President will have 10 calendar days to consider the bills once the resolutions are delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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