



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation Council approves the Navajo Nation Officer Standards and Training Certification Act



PHOTO: The Law and Order Committee members, Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, and Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources during the 2018 Summer Council Session at the Council Chamber in Window Rock, Ariz. on July 19, 2018.

WINDOW ROCK – On the final day of the 2018 Summer Council Session on Thursday, the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0198-18, amending Title 2 and Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code to enact the Navajo Nation Peace Officer Standards and Training Certification Act.

If signed into law, the act would establish the Navajo Nation Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission including provisions of the commission’s purpose, membership, and powers. The act also creates the requirements to become a Navajo Nation Peace Officer.

Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins), who sponsored the legislation and serves as the vice chair of the Law and Order Committee, asked for the Council's support for the Navajo Nation to set its own standards and training requirements for law enforcement officers serving within the Nation.

"The Navajo Nation is in critical need of law enforcement officers including police officers, fish, wildlife, and forestry officers, environmental protections officers, executive security officers, and criminal investigators. Most of our officers receive training through standards of the state of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, and the federal government. The Navajo Nation is in need of its own standards and training requirements," said Delegate Smith.

He added that if approved, the Navajo Nation would be the first tribe in the United States to establish its own peace officer standards and certification.

According to the legislation, the Navajo Nation Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission would consist of the chief prosecutor, chief of police, a commissioned law enforcement officer employed with the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, Navajo Nation Ramah Police Department chief of police, and the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency's criminal enforcement supervisor.

The commission's purpose would be to assist the Navajo Nation law enforcement agencies in providing qualified, trained, and certified peace officers by administering requalification, training, basic training certification requirements, and certification of Navajo Nation Peace Officers.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), who co-sponsored the legislation, stated that establishing a unique peace officer standards and certification would allow law enforcement to address complex public safety issues on the Nation.

"In the past 10 years, the Navajo Nation has been sending law enforcement recruits to the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and the federal law enforcement agencies to receive certification. Our officers need to be equipped with our Navajo Nation laws, along with state and federal laws. This act would allow us to create our own standards that would best fit the Navajo Nation," said Delegate Begay. "We need to train, certify, and employ our Navajo law enforcement officers here on the Navajo Nation."

At the end of the discussion, Delegate Smith stated that the act would also assist and further develop the police academy at Chinle Police District.

"On June 22, the Navajo Nation Police Department gained 12 new police officers at the Chinle police academy. The act would allow the police academy to grow and certify more officers," said Delegate Smith.

Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety director Jesse Delmar, thanked the Law and Order Committee for working collaboratively with the Division of Public Safety and Division of Natural Resources to create a historic program for Navajo law enforcement officers.

The Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0198-18 with a 15-1 vote. The President will have 10 calendar days to consider the bill once the resolution is delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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