



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Navajo Nation requests direct services from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Last Thursday, the Naabik’iyátí’ Committee approved two separate legislations sponsored by Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), requesting the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide direct services on the Navajo Nation for Navajo veterans, to establish a veterans hospital on the Navajo Nation, and to create personnel positions on the Navajo Nation to address housing needs for thousands of Navajo veterans.

Delegate Begay said the Navajo Nation has stepped up by creating its own Navajo Veterans Administration that provides short-term financial assistance and some housing for veterans, however, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs also needs to have a presence within Navajo communities so that Navajo veterans do not have to travel hundreds of miles to seek direct services or medical attention.

Committee members approved Legislation No. 0322-18 by a vote of 10-0, which requests that direct services be provided on the Navajo Nation by the federal government. The bill states that according to census data from nearly 10 years ago, there are over 128,000 Native American veterans, more than 10,000 of which are members of the Navajo Nation.

Legislation No. 0323-18 was also approved by Naabik’iyátí’ Committee members by a vote of 10-0, which requests the federal government to establish a veterans hospital on the Navajo Nation and to create personnel positions on the Navajo Nation to address housing needs for Navajo veterans.

In July, the Navajo Nation Council passed legislation sponsored by Delegate Begay to create the Navajo Nation’s own veterans housing program under the Navajo Veterans Administration, however, Delegate Begay said much more is needed to provide adequate housing.

“In every community across the Navajo Nation, we have veterans who have been asking for our assistance to advocate at the federal level for services, medical needs, and housing. It is our responsibility as elected leaders to advocate for them and that is the intent of these two pieces of

legislation,” stated Delegate Begay. “We can go to the Department of Veterans Affairs with these resolutions in hand and say that this is what we want for our veterans.”

In September, Delegate Begay met with top officials from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and recommended that the Navajo Nation and U.S. VA hold a round table discussion to better understand how they can work together and provide better services.

The Naabik’iyáí’ Committee serves as the final authority for both legislations.

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