



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Naabik'íyáti' Committee supports proposed partnership with states to participate in the growth and production of industrial hemp

WINDOW ROCK – On Thursday, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee met to discuss Legislation No. 0191-18, a bill that would authorize the Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, or a designee, to initiate contact with the agricultural departments for the states of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona, to establish the Navajo Nation's participation in the growth and production of industrial hemp.

The legislation states that the Agricultural Act of 2014, also known as the Federal Farm Bill, authorized states to establish agricultural research projects involving the production of industrial hemp, in which the states of Arizona and New Mexico currently have enabling legislations authorizing their participation in the pilot projects. The states of Colorado and Utah are also eligible to participate in the industrial hemp pilot programs.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Lee Jack, Sr. (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone) said the Farm Bill allows for states to cultivate, produce, test, and sell hemp products, and tribes who are interested in participating in the pilot program must collaborate with their respective state agricultural departments.

"The Navajo Nation should work with the state agricultural departments to begin our own initiative because it is an opportunity for the Nation to increase economic development and bring revenue back to our Nation. It is a way we can provide additional income for Navajo farmers," said Delegate Jack.

Delegate Jack said that if a partnership is established and the Nation decides to participate in the industrial hemp pilot program, he said the Navajo Nation would have the opportunity to grow and cultivate the plant and export it off the Nation, and allows Navajo farmers to also participate as a means to expand their farming operations and businesses.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) cautioned the committee in establishing a partnership with the states, and recommended that Navajo leadership advocate to congressional leaders to amend the Federal Farm Bill to include Indian tribes.

“We are a sovereign nation and should not have to contract with states when we are trying to expand economically. I encourage Navajo leadership to reach out to our congressional leaders to to propose amending language in the federal bill to allow tribes to create their own industrial hemp pilot programs,” said Delegate Begay.

He added that like gaming, the hemp industry would most likely have to be regulated by the state and federal government, and that the Navajo Nation would have to share profits and possibly pay fees to the states for utilizing their technical assistance and program models.

Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tófikán, Red Mesa) said in addition to growing and exporting industrial hemp, the Nation could also consider additional economic pathways to generate revenue by processing the plant for other uses.

“This plant could also be used for medicinal purposes for patients and veterans suffering from physical and mental illnesses. The Paiute Tribe in Nevada sells cannabis products for medical and recreational use, and they are very successful. We don’t want to develop anything for recreational use, but we can use hemp as a another product to sell within the medical industry to help people with chronic illnesses,” said Delegate Filfred.

Naabik’íyáti’ Committee members voted 10-5 to approve Legislation No. 0191-18 with one amendment, and serves as the final authority on the bill.

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