



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24th Navajo Nation Council pass veto override legislation at December Special Session

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Dec. 19, 2019 – At the Special Session of the 24th Navajo Nation Council on Dec. 19, 2019, three of four Council resolutions from the Fall Session that were vetoed by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez were overridden.

The Naabik'iyáti' Committee of the Navajo Nation Council approved each of the overriding legislation at its Dec. 12, 2019 meeting. Those approvals advanced the four legislation to the special session of the full Navajo Nation Council.

Legislation No. 0358-19, sponsored by Hon. Edison J. Wauneka and cosponsored by Hon. Paul Begay, was an override of Navajo Nation Council Resolution CO-38-19. Legislation No. 0360-19, sponsored by Hon. Carl R. Slater and cosponsored by Hon. Jamie Henio, was an override of Resolution CO-40-19. Both resolutions, CO-38-19 and CO-40-19, amended the Navajo Election Code for clarification of the appointment, special election, removal provisions and the Office of Hearings and Appeals procedures.

Legislation 0362-19, sponsored by Hon. Nathaniel Brown, was an override of Resolution CO-37-19.

Resolution CO-37-19 increased the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority's debt limit to \$1.5 billion. The increase was approved after the NTUA requested the ability to raise an additional \$1 billion to finance future infrastructure projects across the Navajo Nation.

Delegate Brown said the Navajo Nation needs economic development, especially with the projected budget shortfall from the closure of Navajo Generating Station.

“With this override, the NTUA has approval to pursue the funding to expand the Navajo Nation's energy portfolio. The Navajo Nation Council's support of our tribal enterprise is a critical part of diversifying our utility's economic roadmap. Kayenta I and Kayenta II solar farms are investments that are already seeing returns, and we want to continue to support projects like that,” he said.



PHOTO: The 24th Navajo Nation Council held a special session Dec. 19, 2019 to address Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez' vetos of four Council resolutions. Here, Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. presents additional legislation for the Tselani-Cottonwood Powerline Extension Project, which the Council approved.

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Legislation 0370-19, sponsored by Hon. Daniel E. Tso, failed to obtain the 16 votes needed to override the president's veto of CO-36-19. Resolution CO-36-19 amended the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission's plan of operation in Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code. The changes to the commission would have reflected updates to the language that referenced previous Navajo Nation Council committees and added new language to bolster the commission's ability to provide direct assistance to Navajo people experiencing human rights violations, including discriminatory practices.

The rules of overriding presidential vetoes require the Navajo Nation Council to go directly to a vote at a session of the full Council and two-thirds, or 16 Council Delegates, must vote to approve the override.

The Naabik'iyáti' Committee invited President Nez to its Dec. 12 meeting to provide Council Delegates greater clarification for his use of executive veto authority. According to the Navajo Nation Code, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee provides the only opportunity for discussion on overriding vetoes.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council also considered eight other legislation items at its Dec. 19 special session, including the confirmation of three new Navajo Nation District Court Judges: Hon. Neomi Gilmore, Hon. Letitia Stover, and Hon. Macolm Laughing. The newly confirmed judges will serve a two-year probationary term, after which the Law and Order Committee will perform an evaluation of performance.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council voted to approve Legislation No. 0306-19, sponsored by Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr., which sought Síhásin funding for the Tselani-Cottonwood Powerline Extension Project. The NTUA will design, plan, and construct the project, which passed by a vote of 21-2 with a clause that NTUA shall not raise cost estimates.

The Navajo Nation Council is the legislative body of the Navajo Nation and is comprised of 24 Council Delegates representing 110 Chapters. The Naabik'iyáti' Committee is one of five standing committees and also includes all 24 Council Delegates as members.



PHOTO: Council Delegates (background) gather on the floor following the appointment of Larry Rogers (foreground) to the Commission on Navajo Government Development, Legislation No. 0361-19. The 24th Navajo Nation Council held a special session on Dec. 19, 2019 to consider 12 legislation items, including four veto overrides.

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