



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Council Expresses Appreciation for Light Up Navajo Volunteers



NTUA representatives present information on the Light Up Navajo initiative.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The 24th Navajo Nation Council Naabik'iyáti' Committee expressed their gratitude to the volunteers of the Light Up Navajo initiative in a special session Wednesday, June 5.

NTUA General Manager Walter Haase developed the Light Up Navajo initiative as a way to pool resources from member utilities of the American Public Power Association to connect Navajo homes to the electric grid.

Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) sponsored 0129-19, the legislation thanking the Light Up Navajo participants, which passed 19-0.

"I want to thank NTUA for thinking outside the box, for trying something different," said Delegate Nelson BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch'izhí).

"On average, we connect 474 homes per year," said Arash Moalemi, NTUA general counsel. "With the [Light Up Navajo] project we connected an additional 233 homes."

In total, 28 utilities and 138 individual volunteers participated in the project. Participating linemen and utility crews spent anywhere from two to four weeks volunteering on the Nation. NTUA and sponsors provided the materials and some equipment, with the volunteer utilities providing the labor and some equipment.

The NTUA presenters and many delegates shared stories of families being overcome with joy with their new access to electricity.

“The first thing one couple did was go down and buy some popsicles to place in their new freezer for their kids,” shared Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahat’a Dziil, Tsé Si’áni, Wide Ruins). “You could see the gleam on their faces and how happy they were.”

Shannon Burnette, an NTUA project administrator, shared that one volunteer crew was so moved by their work with one family that they bought the family a refrigerator.

Looking to next year, Haase shared that he hopes to connect 300 homes and recruit more volunteer utilities. Both he and delegates shared that they will work on streamlining the right-of-way process for connecting homes to the grid in order to connect more homes in the future.

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