



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Council Expresses Support for Diné Filling Late Senator Dr. Pinto's Seat

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – At Wednesday's Special Council Session, the 24th Navajo Nation Council passed legislation respectfully requesting that New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham appoint a citizen of the Navajo Nation to serve in the late Senator Dr. John Pinto's seat until a new election is held.

Delegates paid tribute to the late Senator Pinto and sought, through the legislation, to ensure that his seat would remain represented by someone who is directly connected to the Navajo Nation.

Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahí, Whiterock), the legislation's sponsor, explained that the San Juan and McKinley county commissioners will submit a list of individuals from which the governor will appoint someone to serve in the seat until an election is held.

"We need to ensure that the appropriate person carries on the legacy of Senator Dr. Pinto," said Delegate Freeland. "With this legislation, we send a message that a Navajo citizen will best carry on Senator Pinto's legacy of strong advocacy for Navajo New Mexico citizens."

During the legislation's discussion, delegates considered whether to request that the governor wait one moon cycle, as is Navajo custom, before discussing an appointment to the late senator's seat. After deliberation, the motion to amend the legislation as such was withdrawn.

Due to the on-going discussion among the counties and New Mexico political arena, Delegate Freeland brought forth the emergency legislation at the beginning of the June 5th special session, and it was added to the agenda unanimously.

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