



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Law and Order Committee advocates for improved benefits for surviving spouses and children of late Navajo Nation police officers**

**ALBUQUERQUE** – Last Friday, the Law and Order Committee received reports from Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, Navajo Nation Employee Benefits Program, Navajo Nation Worker’s Compensation Program, Navajo Nation Department of Justice, and Navajo Nation Office of Management and Budget regarding benefit plans for surviving spouses and children of late Navajo Nation police officers.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) stated that the intent of the meeting was to direct all the involved parties to develop policy changes that benefit the families of fallen officers.

“It’s long over due to address the employee benefits of Navajo officers. Our Nation’s officers work twice as hard to cover 27,000 square-miles of land and they should be given the best benefit plans. It saddens me that the spouses and children of late officers who lost their lives in the line of duty have to endure emotional and financial troubles. We need to increase their benefits,” stated Delegate Yazzie.

NNDOJ principal tribal court advocate Arita Yazzie, explained that Navajo Nation police officers are under the same employee benefit plan of all Navajo Nation employees.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) recommended that police officers and first responders have a separate benefit and pension plan.

“Our police officers and first responders are mixed with all the regular Navajo employees. I believe it is possible to create a unique and separate benefit plan for them. For example, the benefit plan can include death benefits that can cover burial expenses, family support, and educational scholarships for dependents,” stated Delegate Begay.

“We need to take good care of our police officers. For example, the Nation only contributes \$7,000 for funeral expenses and that is not enough,” added Delegate Begay.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) also recommended that Navajo officers should be entitled to federal benefits.

“Our Navajo officers are unique officers because they carry duties within different jurisdictions. We need to support our officers to get all the benefits they are entitled to,” stated Delegate Smith.

Navajo Nation Police Department chief of police Phillip B. Francisco said the department is currently working on the revision of the BIA 638 law enforcement contract, which will be considered by the committee.

At the conclusion of the meeting, LOC directed the departments to bring forth policy changes that address the concerns and issues within two months.

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