



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee requests Utah to support the First Responder Network Authority's plan for nation-wide broadband coverage

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday during a special Law and Order Committee meeting, the committee supported Legislation No. 0302-17, which recommends the state of Utah to support and opt-in to the First Responder Network Authority's plan for nation-wide broadband coverage and infrastructure development. The legislation also supports and commends the states of New Mexico and Arizona for opting-in to the plan earlier this month.

In 2012, Congress established FirstNet, which is designed to deliver a nationwide broadband network dedicated to public safety, to strengthen public safety users' communications capabilities enabling them to respond more quickly and effectively to accidents, disasters, and emergencies.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), sponsor of the legislation, has been a strong advocate for implementing FirstNet on the Navajo Nation.

"The FirstNet plan will help Navajo communities with providing necessary public safety services through advanced technologies. The plan allows the states to opt in to assist police, fire, rescue, emergency management and other public safety personnel," stated Delegate Begay.

According to the legislation, the plan is designed to assist first responders with communicating and coordinating during emergency situations.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) said his concern is that the main network carrier on the Navajo Nation is Cellular One, which may complicate the implementation process.

"Currently, Cellular One and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority's Choice Wireless have the authority to provide network coverage for the Nation and how will that affect FirstNet's plan, because they utilize AT&T?" asked Delegate Smith.

Delegate Begay responded, "The initiative is to provide nation-wide broadband coverage and infrastructure and this plan will make that happen on the Nation. The Nation would have to adjust and transition to the plan, which is mandated by Congress. This will help our first responders when a significant public safety crisis happens and when commercial networks, such as Cellular One and Choice Wireless, quickly become congested. The plan will benefit the Nation."

“The plan will assist the Nation’s public safety to resources in any emergency situation,” added Delegate Begay, who has requested to meet with each of the governors from Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona to ensure the entire Navajo Nation is covered under the plan.

The Law and Order Committee approved Legislation No. 0302-17 with a 3-0 vote. The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

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