



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee supports prohibiting chapter officials from financial transactions three months prior to general election

TSE BONITO, N.M. – On Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee considered Legislation No. 0176-17, which seeks to amend Title 26 section 1001 and section 2003 of the Navajo Nation Code. Title 26 outlines the Navajo Nation Local Governance Act and includes the duties and responsibilities of chapter officials and chapter appropriations.

The proposed amendment states that elected chapter officials would be prohibited from conducting financial transactions or expenditures, except for general chapter operating costs, three months prior to the general election for chapter officials.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai'Bii'To, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) stated that the proposed amendment would deter the potential for the mismanagement of chapter funds.

“At the last three months of the chapter officials’ terms, they go on shopping sprees. They make unnecessary financial transactions or expenditures and they leave the chapter with financial burdens and it causes chapters to be sanctioned. Accountability and transparency should be practiced all the way to the end of their terms,” stated Delegate Slim.

The legislation also states that Resolution CJY-43-04, which enacted the Local Governance Improvement Act of 2004, omitted portions of sections 1001 and 2003 because the “improper use of Navajo Nation funds are adequately addressed under the Navajo Nation Ethics in Government Law and it is considered unnecessary for the additional restrictions placed on chapters.”

“The legislation serves to reinsert the previous language to address the improper use of funds,” added Delegate Slim.

RDC member Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) said the legislation might raise issues over micromanagement.

“I tried to pass a legislation that instructed chapters not to schedule planning and regular meetings during Naabik'iyáti' Committee and Council meetings, but there wasn't enough support because many of my colleagues thought it was a form of micromanagement,” stated Delegate Filfred. “We also need Navajo Election Administration, Navajo Nation Division of Community Development, and Office of Navajo Government Development's input and recommendations.”

RDC member Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock) questioned when chapters could respond to the legislation if approved.

According to the legislation, the amendment is subject to approval by a majority of Navajo Nation chapters. Upon approval by the Navajo Nation Council and President, at least 56 of the 110-chapters must submit supporting resolutions for the amendment to take effect.

"I believe there is no deadline for chapters to submit their resolutions regarding the amendments. I strongly recommend to put a deadline within the legislation for chapters to submit resolutions," stated Delegate Perry.

The Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0176-17 with a 3-0 vote, which included one amendment for chapters to submit resolutions to the Office of Legislative Services director no later than one-year from the passage of the legislation. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority for the bill.

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