



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Veterans demand accountability from Navajo Veterans Administration



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates speaks with Navajo veterans outside of the Council Chamber in Window Rock, Ariz. on Oct. 17, 2018.

WINDOW ROCK – The Navajo Nation Council recessed for over one hour during the third day of the Fall Council Session on Wednesday, to welcome a group of Navajo veterans that marched many miles to the Council Chamber to demand accountability and action from the Navajo Veterans Administration, which is directly under the authority of President Russell Begaye.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) thanked the group for their persistence and advocacy on behalf of all Navajo veterans and for bringing their issues to the attention of Navajo leaders.

“Since the 23rd Navajo Nation Council took office in 2015, we have passed numerous legislations supporting additional funds, housing services, and other direct services for Navajo veterans. In

many cases the legislations were unanimously approved and from there on it is the responsibility of the President and his administration to implement them,” stated Speaker Bates.

Many of the marchers held up signs demanding that President Begaye release funds that were approved through Council resolutions to provide housing and other direct assistance for veterans.

Speaker Bates outlined a number of resolutions passed by the 23rd Navajo Nation Council that benefit Navajo veterans including the following:

- Resolution CMY-50-18, which approved \$1,094,784 for the five veterans agency organizations to assist veterans with direct services.
- Resolution CJY-60-18, which approved \$1.2 million for the Navajo Veterans Administration to assist veterans with emergency assistance requests, energy assistance, burial assistance, and weatherization assistance.
- Resolution CJA-02-18, which approved an increase in funding available for direct services each year for Navajo veterans through the Veterans Trust Fund.
- Resolution CJY-55-18, which approved the establishment of the Veterans Housing Program within the Navajo Veterans Administration

The Navajo Nation Council adopted each of the resolutions and it is the responsibility and duty of the executive branch to implement them, added Speaker Bates.

He said despite claims by President Begaye that the resolutions are not clear or lack legal sufficiency, the fact remains that attorneys from both the legislative and executive branches played a role in developing the legislations. He added that President Begaye had every opportunity to seek clarification when the legislation was making its way through the Council’s Standing Committees and during the 10-day timeframe after the Council passed them.

“This Council has done a lot to help Navajo veterans, but the disbursement of funds is in the hands of the executive branch and it is their obligation at this time to resolve the internal issues they have and help our veterans,” said Speaker Bates.

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