



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **Law and Order Committee continues efforts to increase salary for Navajo Nation police officers**

**TOHAJIILEE, N.M.** – On Tuesday, the Law and Order Committee received an update report from the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety regarding salary increases for Navajo police officers. The discussion was a follow-up to recommendations issued at a meeting with the Bureau of Indian Affairs on May 25.

“The purpose of this meeting is to strategically plan how to advocate for more BIA funding for NNDPS personnel. NNDPS receives the lowest salary compared to other tribes and the BIA. Direction was given from the meeting with BIA two weeks ago on how to increase the salaries,” stated LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau).

According to NNDPS Director Jesse Delmar, the Navajo Nation Department of Corrections, Navajo Department of Criminal Investigation, and Navajo Police Patrols are funded under 638 contracts, which is overseen by the federal Office of Justice Services.

“We need the BIA to honor the 638 contracts, which includes fair salary for NNDPS personnel. Other tribal, County, and state public safety positions have competitive salaries. The Nation does not have competitive wages to attract potential candidates. For example, we train many Navajo officers but they leave to get jobs at other competitive police departments once they complete training. To keep these officers, we need to increase their pay,” stated Delmar.

“For example, Navajo Correction Sergeant makes \$37,065 a year and BIA Correction Sergeant makes \$47,289. That is a \$10,000 difference,” added NNDPS Director Delores Greyeyes as she presented the pay scale comparison between the BIA and NNDPS.

LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi) questioned whether or not 638 contracts are fulfilling the needs of NNDPS and the process that the BIA uses to determine and allocate funds to tribes.

“When the Nation emphasizes the public safety needs, does the BIA fully fund our needs? We need to keep BIA accountable to the contracts. The funding allocation also needs to be analyzed. I believe it’s an unfair process when funding is determined for the Nation. For example, as I was

driving to the Tohajiilee, I saw Laguna police officers driving Mustang units and our Navajo police officers drive older units. What is wrong with this picture?” questioned Delegate Tso.

According to BIA Navajo Region Director Sharon Pinto, NNDPS can request for additional funding and salary increases with justifications. NNDPS had funding carryovers from the 638 funding contracts, which raises questions.

“There are many internal issues when the 638 funding is received. The funding has to go through Controllers Office and Navajo Nation Office of Management and Budget. OMB, Controller, and NNDPS have different account records of carryovers and balances. NNDPS account records show less money carryovers but Controllers Office has a higher carryover balance, which is a problem. We need to resolve the internal issues before we ask for additional funding,” added Delmar.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) emphasized that the main goal is to increase the salary of NNDPS personnel and limit internal issues.

The Law and Order Committee approved the report from NNDPS with a vote of 2-1 along with a directive to receive another update report from NDPS, Controllers Office, OMB, and Navajo Department of Personnel Management in two weeks.

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