



Navajo Nation Council Approves the Opening of Navajo-owned Businesses and In-Person Instruction

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Friday, during the 24th Navajo Nation Council Special Session, Legislation No. 0104-21 was approved with a vote of 23 in favor and 0 opposed, which authorizes in-person instruction for schools operating within the Navajo Nation and the re-opening of Navajo-owned and maintained roads and Navajo-owned businesses to Navajo citizens and non-Navajo tourists.

“I think it’s time for us to get back to business — within reason — to restart our economy and to support more democratic participation,” said Sponsor Council Delegate Carl Slater (Round Rock, Rock Point, Tséché’izí, Lukachukai, Tsaile-Wheatfields). “There is a perception among many people that the chapters are closed and they are denied access from participating in their local chapter governments.”

The legislation, which was drafted to rescind language that caused the original re-opening to be vetoed by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, will repeal COVID-19 related legislations implemented at the beginning of the pandemic to protect Navajo citizens.

Among those being repealed, Resolution CMA-16-20, which enacted the closure of all Navajo Nation-owned and maintained roads to visitors and tourists, will be rescinded to aid local businesses suffering from the lack of commerce.

“If we want self-reliance, economic development, and increased employment — especially for our young people — then let’s open up our Navajo businesses,” said Council Delegate Paul Begay (Coppermine, K’ai’bii’tó, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake, Bodaway/Gap). “Tour season is already half over and we’re still preventing our Diné businesses from operating again. Our students are waiting to get back to their summer jobs.”

Additionally, the legislation will grant Navajo Nation Chapters authority to discuss matters that are not within the categories related to COVID-19, budget authorizations and approvals, the Navajo Nation’s Emergency Declaration, and any other topics pursuant to CAP-19-20.

A few council delegates voiced concerns over the health, safety and well-being of the chapters they represent.

Stating chapters may not be ready to revert to in-person activities and that in doing so, they would not meet the pre-pandemic quorum requirements outlined in the legislation.

Delegate Slater reminded the Navajo Nation Council that chapters still have the option to conduct their meetings virtually, in-person, or a hybrid version to meet the quorum requirements.

“We have the opportunity here to liberate some of the requirements of the chapters, untie their hands, and convey to our people that they can participate in their government.” said Delegate Slater.

President Jonathan Nez has 10-days to sign the legislation, which was delivered to him on Monday, June 28, 2021.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Kolton Nephew, Legislative Staff Writer, koltonnephew@navajo-nsn.gov (928) 380-5733
Kyron Hardy, Public Information Officer, kyronhardy@navajo-nsn.gov (928) 380-5732
Donovan Hanley, Legislative Staff Assistant, dahanley@navajo-nsn.gov