



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Veterans join Navajo Nation Council to address critical shortfalls with the Veterans Administration

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PHOTO: Speaker Seth Damon provides closing address during Veterans forum at the Navajo Nation Council Chambers.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Today, Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh) and members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council joined a gathering of veterans and their families to discuss their grievances and the shortfalls of direct services offered by the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration (NNVA). Veterans and surviving spouses shared their frustration with the lack of support provided by tribal, state, and federal agencies during the pandemic.

“Our veterans and their agency commanders were heard clearly today. The Navajo Nation Council will work with President Nez to better streamline the processes on how our veterans receive assistance quickly,” said Speaker Seth Damon. “We ask the Nez-Lizer Administration to provide us with the necessary budget forms being held at the Veterans Administration to expedite legislation. A special session will be held next week so that there are no stop gaps that would affect veteran services.”

Around noon, a crowd of about 50+ veterans, surviving spouses, Gold and Blue Star Mothers, and several supporters spoke on how — despite their sacrifice for their country — Navajo veterans continue to encounter large disparities. It was reported that the Navajo Nation Veteran Housing Program has not constructed a home in four years and budgetary problems continue to hinder support.

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Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock) echoed the failings of not only the administration but also the Navajo Nation Office of the President & Vice-President (OPVP). While speaking, she announced that she has introduced legislation that would put veterans under the Naabik'ayati' Committee in order to allow Council Delegates to hear directly from them. Additionally, another legislation would recognize Navajo veterans as a fourth branch of government to uphold Diné Fundamental Laws.

“It is concerning to me that funding for veteran services is not being taken seriously,” said Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé'ahnáoozt'íí, Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gad'ii'áhi/Tó Ko'i). “We received the resolutions from the agencies regarding the budget and it was well documented. There were several requests made to the Navajo Veterans Administration to submit a budget that met your needs. Our veterans' voices must never be silenced and we hear you.”

Wallace Charley, who is a former New Mexico State Legislator, San Juan County Commissioner, former Navajo Nation Council Delegate, and Veteran Service Officer for Shiprock Veterans Affairs, spoke at the forum. He brought up how many veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the increase risks of suicide, divorce, and alcoholism — especially during the pandemic.

Those in attendance were Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tónaneesdizi), Council Delegate Raymond Smith Jr. (Klagetoh, Wide Ruins, Houck, Lupton, Nahat'á Dził), and Council Delegate Carl Slater (Round Rock, Rock Point, Tséch'izí, Lukachugai, Tsaile-Wheatfields).

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