



Creation of Navajo Nation Veterans Board of Commissioners fails at 2022 Fall Council Session

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PHOTO: Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. advocates for postal services, veterans, and broadband in Washington, D.C.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Today, Legislation No. 0021-22 failed during the second day of the 2022 Navajo Nation Council Fall Session. Legislation No. 0021-22 would have amended the selection process of the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration (NNVA) Executive Director and portions of Title 2 relating to the Navajo Nation Veterans Act.

Sponsored by Hon. Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain), Legislation No. 0021-22 has been in the legislative process since the beginning of January of this year.

“Today’s setback prolongs the issues of our Navajo Veterans but as Council Delegate, I will continue to push forward to ensure all of our veterans’ concerns are heard and addressed by leadership at all levels,” said Delegate Begay. “The legislative process takes time but I thank all who have supported my legislation to uplift our veterans across the Navajo Nation.”

The legislation would have changed the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council to become the Navajo Nation Veterans Board of Commissioners. The commissioners would have the authority to recommend the appointment and termination of the NNVA Executive Director to the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee and Navajo Nation Council.

As a Board of Commissioners, veterans would be able to recommend rules, policies, and procedures for the board as well as recommend any modification to legislations or address any concerns relating to veterans and veterans' affairs. They would also have the ability to review and make recommendations for funding and budget matters for the board and NNVA.

This legislation was heard during the 2022 Summer Session and a motion was made to refer the legislation to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee for a Work Session to be held to gather input from the Eastern and Western Agency Veterans' Organizations. As a result, two public hearings were held in both the Eastern and Western Agency to satisfy the requirement made by the 24th Navajo Nation Council.

Supporting resolutions from the Fort Defiance, Central, and Northern Agency Veterans Organizations were submitted as well as support from the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council. The Eastern and Western Agency Veterans Organizations did not provide any documents for support or opposition for the legislation.

Additionally, during a Special Session held last month, the legislation failed to be added to the agenda due to the possible amendments of Title 2. According to the Navajo Nation Code, any amendments made to Title 2 can only be made during the quarterly council sessions.

Today's quarterly session required a two-thirds vote before being sent to Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez for final authority. The legislation failed with 14 Council Delegates in-favor and 9 opposed.

"As elected leaders, it is important that we continue the dialogue between Council and our constituents to best determine what is in the best interests of our veterans and Blue & Gold Star mothers and their families," said Hon. Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh). "The 24th Navajo Nation Council will continue to work with our local communities to communicate their thoughts on how we can support our warriors."

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