



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee receives report on Department of Corrections Audit and Consent Decree and tours the Twin Arrows First Responders Substation



PHOTO: Dr. Delores Greyeyes speaking to the Navajo Nation Council Delegates at the Twin Arrows First Responder Substation in Leupp, Ariz. on March 13, 2023.

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Monday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council’s Law and Order Committee (LOC) received a report from Navajo Nation Department of Corrections (DOC) Director, Dr. Delores Greyeyes. The report provided information regarding the Department of Correction’s creation in 1995, as a result of a lawsuit by Navajo inmates who sued the Navajo Nation for inhumane conditions in detention facilities.

Director Greyeyes was tasked with addressing the mandates of the 1992 Consent Decree, which included overcrowding, inmate health care, nutrition, sanitation, and the physical well-being of the Navajo inmates. Recommendations were provided to the LOC outlining how the committee may help which including amendments to the Navajo Nation Criminal Code, Title 17. LOC Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock), shared information about the work conducted by the previous committee members under the 24th Navajo Nation Council.

“We worked for almost a year on amending the current Criminal Code, Title 17. It was a team effort working with prosecutors, law enforcement, NNDOJ, criminal investigators, detention, and others. Unfortunately, time ran out for the 24th Navajo Nation Council and the Title 17 Legislation was not acted upon, and as a result, died on December 30, 2022. In addition to Title 17, we worked to collect the necessary data to prove to our federal leaders that Navajo’s needs are present, and the data shows it,” said LOC Chair Charles-Newton.

In addition, the LOC received a report on the Federal Audit that the DOC was under which is almost complete. To date, of the nine findings, eight have been addressed.

Upon completion of the report, LOC members were joined by Ramah Navajo Chief of Police, Steven Eldridge and other Ramah law enforcement personnel, as well as Council Delegate Curtis Yanito (Mexican Water, To’likan, Teenospos, Aneth, Red Mesa) as they toured the Twin Arrows First Responders Substation. According to Chair Charles-Newton, 15 rural communities were identified as possible sites for Substation development, when and if funds become available. As of November 2022, the cost to build one substation at 14,950 square feet is estimated to be over \$8 million dollars.

LOC member Council Delegate Nathan Notah (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl’a’a’), said, “Having the opportunity to see the facility firsthand is great. It will serve rural communities and help address the many issues associated with not seeing first responders in the communities across the Navajo Nation. Certainly, my community in District 14 and specifically Tohatchi will benefit from one of these facilities.”

The LOC will be working to secure the necessary funds needed to construct more first responders substations in rural communities.

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