



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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25th Navajo Nation Council approves a \$737,800 funding allocation from the Navajo Nation Fair Fund



DNR Executive Director Mike Halona (left), Delegate Chair Brenda Jesus (Center), and Delegate Steven R. Arviso (right).

Window Rock, Ariz. – During a special session on Monday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council voted in support of Legislation No. 0142-24, allocating \$737,800 from the Navajo Nation Fair Fund to help fund facility repairs, upgrades, and activities for the upcoming Navajo Nation Fair.

According to Navajo Nation Controller Sean McCabe, who reported on this legislation before the Naabik'iyáti' Committee last Thursday, the Navajo Nation Fair Fund is a designated fund consisting of revenues generated by previous fair activities.

Controller McCabe added that the fund balance that is available represents revenues that have exceeded expenditures over the years resulting in a positive fund balance.

The Council did not approve the legislation without scrutiny, calling on the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) to address questions about the lack of improvements to the fairgrounds, ADA compliance issues, and concerns regarding accountability.

DNR Executive Director Mike Halona reported that fair organizers have raised \$750,000 in sponsorship funds which are being used for fairground repairs, paying the stock contractor, and OSHA compliance issues.

According to Halona, the funding allocation will also go toward additional improvements, portable restrooms, janitorial services, tent rentals, and funding the fair events.

During the special session, Council Delegate George Tolth commented on the general lack of accountability and financial reporting presented on behalf of DNR and the fair office. "How many years have we had the fair and why is there no accountability?" Delegate Tolth asked.

The Council approved an amendment offered by Delegate Tolth directing DNR and the fair office to provide a written and verbal report on all expenditures under the Navajo Nation's contract with its fiscal agent Building Nations, LLC, for goods and services the company will provide for the 2024 Navajo Nation Fair. The report is to be presented to the Council at the upcoming Fall Session in October.

Delegate Vince James questioned DNR's contract with Building Nations, LLC, stating that the legislation requests \$300,000 for the fiscal agent to complete capital outlay repairs and upgrades for ADA compliance, which the agent cannot undertake due to time constraints.

"How can DNR make accommodations to Nakai and Gorman Halls within one week? If you read the contract with Building Nations, they cannot repair the building," Delegate James stated. "These positions they're funding are for five months, over 700 hours. What makes you think we can hire someone this week when the Nation has over 300 vacant positions?"

Delegate James proposed an amendment reducing the requested amount by \$339,463, bringing the legislation's total request down from \$1,077,263 to \$737,800.

Council members also noted that the fair is economically beneficial for many Navajo vendors and small businesses who depend on fair revenues for their income. Council Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie called for an amendment directing the Navajo Nation Fair Office and DNR to develop a survey to be distributed to all vendors at the 2024 Navajo Nation Fair.

"How much do they make during the fair? How much help do they receive beyond the fair? What improvements do they want to see?" Delegate Yazzie asked. "I don't see this data."

The survey will collect data pertaining to the vendor's net revenues, profits, enhancing small business sustainability, and improvements to the fairgrounds that will benefit small businesses.

Delegate Rickie Nez reinforced the fact that the requested funds were initially generated by fair revenues and deposited into the proprietary Navajo Nation Fair Fund.

Legislation No. 0142-24 was approved with a vote of 12 in favor and five opposed. Once the resolution is certified and delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren will have up to ten calendar days to consider the resolution.

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