



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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25th Navajo Nation Council passes legislation strengthening protections against radioactive material



Delegate Danny Simpson (left) and NNEPA Executive Director Stephen Etsitty (right) address the transportation of radioactive material on state routes through Navajo lands.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Monday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council convened a special session and unanimously approved emergency legislation to amend and strengthen the Radioactive Materials Transportation Act of 2012.

Legislation No. 0198-24, sponsored by Council Delegate Casey Allen Johnson and co-sponsored by Delegates Brenda Jesus and Danny Simpson, will strengthen the Navajo Nation's regulatory authority over the transportation of uranium and other radioactive materials across its lands if the resolution is signed into law by the Navajo Nation President.

The discussion, led by Delegate Danny Simpson and Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency Executive Director Stephen Etsitty highlighted the urgency in addressing the transport of uranium ore through Navajo lands.

On July 30, Energy Fuels Resources, a uranium production company, authorized two trucks carrying uranium ore to pass through the Navajo Nation, without prior consent from or

notification to the Navajo Nation, raising significant concerns about the safety of Navajo residents and communities. The uranium ore was transported on a state route through the communities to the White Mesa Mill in Utah, for processing.

Delegate Simpson emphasized, "This legislation was a necessary step to ensure that our sovereignty is respected and that our people are protected from the potential dangers of uranium transport. The events of July 30th were a clear violation of our laws."

Council members discussed the implications of the proposed amendments, particularly considering rising uranium prices and renewed interest in uranium mining across the United States. Delegates expressed concerns about the potential long-term health impacts on communities along the transport routes and the need for greater regulatory oversight.

The Council passed an amendment proposed by Council Delegate Herman Daniels, to include a resolution passed by the Navajo Utah Commission on Aug. 6, which outlines the commission's opposition to the transport of uranium.

The amendments introduced interim regulations that would serve as an initial framework for negotiating with companies involved in uranium transport. These regulations will be further developed through a comprehensive rulemaking process, ensuring that the Navajo Nation has the necessary tools to manage and oversee the transport of radioactive materials effectively.

Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Executive Director Stephen Etsitty, who was instrumental in drafting and advocating for the regulations stated, "This legislation provides the Navajo Nation with the statutory strength and regulatory framework needed to protect our lands and people from the hazards associated with uranium transport. We will continue to engage with all stakeholders to ensure that our regulations are enforced and our communities are safeguarded."

The approval of these amendments marks a significant step forward for the Navajo Nation in its ongoing efforts to assert its sovereignty and protect its citizens from hazardous materials.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council voted unanimously in favor of Legislation No. 0198-24 with 15 in favor and none opposed. Once the resolution is certified and delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President, the President will have up to ten calendar days to consider the resolution.

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