



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 13, 2024

Naabik'íyáti' Committee takes action to rescind outdated roadway buffer zone regulations



Delegate Shawna Ann Claw sponsor of Legislation 0247-24.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee advanced Legislation 0247-24, proposing the repeal of outdated provisions that impose a 750-foot buffer zone on either side of roadways within the Navajo Nation, stifling opportunities for residential, economic, and infrastructure development.

Sponsored by Delegate Shawna Ann Claw, the legislation seeks to empower local chapters with greater control over zoning and land-use decisions, fostering growth and eliminating bureaucratic barriers. “The 750-foot buffer zone is an outdated regulation that no longer aligns with the current developmental needs of our Nation,” Delegate Claw stated. “This action empowers our chapters to take control of their zoning and land-use priorities while removing unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.”

Delegate Claw further emphasized the broader benefits of this legislative action, noting that it promotes community involvement where chapter voters can engage with their chapter government to decide on zoning and ordinances.

“Additionally, chapters, as well as Navajo Nation enterprises, already have an outlying system for land withdrawal. It’s designated through the Navajo Nation with an established partnership with Bureau of Indian Affairs,” Delegate Claw said. “The good thing is that we no longer have the inconsistency of conflicting laws. This will alleviate confusion so that there is more economic and growth opportunity for communities.”

The original buffer zone, established to regulate land use and ensure roadway safety, has become a barrier to community growth, particularly in areas with significant residential and economic potential. Under the proposed repeal, local chapters will gain autonomy to define and manage zoning, enabling adaptive and community-driven development.

The Naa'biik'iyati' Committee emphasized the importance of a streamlined Tribal Access Authorization (TAA) process to ensure compliance with environmental, cultural, and archaeological standards. While the legislation promotes local control, council members stressed the importance of balancing development with the preservation of Navajo Nation's cultural and environmental heritage.

During the Naabik'iyati' Committee deliberations, stakeholders raised concerns regarding grazing permits, home-site leases, and ongoing roadway projects. To address these issues, amendments to the legislation provided technical guidelines for land withdrawals and defined inter-agency roles, particularly for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Division of Natural Resources.

Extensive discussions with local chapters revealed widespread support for the repeal of the control zone, with community members highlighting its negative impact on business development and infrastructure projects. Concerns from grazing permit holders and cultural advocates have been incorporated into ongoing stakeholder engagement efforts to ensure a transparent and inclusive process.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty reinforced the Council's commitment to supporting chapters "This legislation creates an opportunity for chapters to lead, but we must ensure that they are equipped with the resources and support necessary for success," said Delegate Crotty.

The Naabik'iyati' Committee voted 12 in favor and one opposed in approving Legislation 0247-24, which now moves to the Navajo Nation Council for final approval. If enacted, the repeal will signify a pivotal step in aligning the Nation's land-use policies with contemporary needs, paving the way for sustainable development and economic growth while honoring cultural and environmental stewardship.

###