



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Navajo Nation Health, Education, and Human Services Committee passes school board background check extension legislation



The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee passed legislation giving school board members 90 days to be in compliance with school background check requirements.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, March 24, the Health, Education, and Human Services (HEHSC) Committee pass Legislation 0030-25, an action to uphold school governance while addressing compliance challenges. The resolution grants an additional 90-day extension for local school board members to complete mandatory criminal background checks, ensuring minimal disruption to educational operations across the Nation.

Legislation sponsor, HEHSC Chair Vince James emphasized the measure’s urgency following recent school board elections and operational delays.

“This legislation gives us a path forward to stabilize school board operations while still respecting the integrity of the background check process,” said James. “We must ensure our schools are functional, especially as we approach critical end-of-year events like graduations and summer school planning.”

The required background check stems from HEHSC Resolution HEHSCD-11-22, passed during the 24th Navajo Nation Council, mandating all school board members to submit federal, state, and Navajo Nation background checks within 90 days of election. However, a lack of procedural clarity, limited infrastructure, and logistical delays have impeded full compliance.

Chair James added, “Many school board members are still uncertain where or how to submit background checks. The Department of Diné Education currently lacks a designated adjudicator, fingerprinting resources, or contracts with background processing entities.”

During the committee meeting, Delegate Dr. Andy Nez opposed the resolution, emphasizing accountability among elected officials. “I respect the committees’ effort to address this problem, but we shouldn’t waive responsibility of elected officials, especially when it concerns our students,” Nez said. “If you’re seeking public office, timely background compliance is part of the duty.”

Legal counsel Candice French clarified the resolution’s implementation period: “The waiver is effective for 90 days from March 11, 2025—the date of the most recent school board election. If unamended, this sets an expiration date of June 9, 2025.”

The legislation allows school board members without completed background checks to participate in off-campus meetings or via teleconference, enabling decision-making while maintaining student safety.

Delegate George Tolth voiced concern over the flexibility, “We need to stick to what was drafted. The school board knows their responsibilities, and meetings shouldn’t be held far from the community they serve.”

Helena Nez-Begay offered support, stating, “Required background checks take time—especially through the Nation. 90 days is already cutting it close. We need to ensure our boards can function, not leave them paralyzed.”

HEHSC members reiterated that all school board members, including those appointed or elected amid school bias claims, are still required to complete federal, state, and tribal background checks. The extension is not a waiver of the requirement, but a temporary allowance to support school functionality while maintaining accountability.

As final authority, the Health, Education, and Human Services passed Legislation 0030-25 with a vote of three in favor and one opposed. The measure underscores the need for clarity in the enforcement of school board background check policies moving forward.

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