



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**25th Navajo Nation Council approves annex of Lower 89 land into Cameron Chapter**



**Council Delegate Casey Allen Johnson sponsored Legislation 0016-25, annexing the Lower 89 Land into Cameron Chapter.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Tuesday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council approved the annexation of approximately 13.79 acres of land, known as the Lower Highway 89 Land, into the Cameron Chapter, marking a significant step toward economic development that will benefit Navajo relocatees.

Legislation No. 0016-25 formalizes the annexation following extensive coordination with the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise (NNGE), the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission, the U.S. Office of Navajo-Hopi Indian Relocation (ONHIR), and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The land has been officially placed into trust status by the United States for the benefit of the Navajo Nation, as authorized by former U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Bryan Newland in November 2024.

“This annexation completes a long process to place this land into trust and align it with the vision of the Cameron Chapter,” said Resources and Development Committee Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson. “Thanks to the efforts of past and current leadership, especially former Chapter President Charlie Smith and current President Evelyn Kerley Little. This land can now support long-term revenue, job creation, and community empowerment through Navajo-preferred hiring and development.”

The annexed land, which includes the Horsemen Lodge parcel, was originally purchased by the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise and conveyed to the Navajo Nation in 2024. The land

serves as a gateway into the Navajo Nation along Highway 89, offering high visibility and tourism potential just north of Flagstaff, Ariz.

Cameron Chapter passed supporting resolutions authorizing economic development on the land, including gaming operations and the sale of alcohol—both of which require formal chapter approval under the Navajo Nation’s gambling and liquor ordinances. According to NNGE General Counsel Ron Rosier, the annexation marks the final step in granting land entitlement rights to NNGE, with a forthcoming business site lease agreement with the Navajo Nation to follow.

Legislation cosponsor Council Delegate Otto Tso noted that the land trust process was carried out under the authority of the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act. “The Navajo-Hopi Land Commission requested the use of federal authority to place the land into trust for the Lower 89 area and Horsemen Lodge,” Tso said.

Delegate Tso also emphasized that relocatees will benefit from the project. “All revenue generated from lease payments will be deposited into the Diné Relocatee Trust Fund, which is administered by the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office,” he said. “These processes are governed by federal law.”

NNGE Executive Director of Development Mary West added that the project’s broader goals are to stimulate regional employment and tourism. “This vision was always about creating jobs and increasing revenue for the southwestern portion of the Navajo Nation,” West said. “These properties will be among the first to welcome travelers into the Nation along Highway 89. Our partnership with Cameron helps position the Nation for growth and visibility.”

“This is a monumental achievement not just for Cameron, but for the entire Nation,” said Vice Chair Johnson. “We now move forward together, grounded in community and empowered by sovereignty.”

The 25th Navajo Nation Council voted to approve Legislation No. 0016-25 with a vote of 12 in favor and five opposed. The Navajo Nation Council has final authority with Legislation No. 0016-25.

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