



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation calls on federal government to uphold government-to-government relations and reaffirms political and legal status of tribes



Co-Sponsor of Legislation 0039-25 Council Delegate Vince R. James.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Naabik'iyáti' Committee of the 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved Legislation No. 0039-25, sponsored by Speaker Crystalyne Curley, to reaffirm the Navajo Nation's government-to-government relationship with the United States, to reassert the legal and political status of tribes, and to call upon the federal government to fully uphold its treaty and trust responsibilities.

"Many of our Navajo people and tribal leaders across the country are concerned about how recent federal actions will impact tribal communities. It's important that we take a stand and reassert our unique status as political entities, which is based on legal precedent within the U.S. Supreme Court. The United States has treaty responsibilities and obligations to the Navajo people," said Speaker Crystalyne Curley. "Our relationship is based on treaties and trust, not a racial classification."

The resolution comes amid growing concern that recent federal actions, particularly executive orders and the rollback of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, may lead to misunderstandings about the legal basis for federal programs and services provided to tribes.

Legislation co-sponsor Council Delegate Vince R. James emphasized that federal programs that benefit the Navajo Nation are not rooted in DEI frameworks, but arise from binding legal commitments established through treaties, congressional acts, court rulings, and executive orders.

“The Treaty of 1868 is still the law of the land,” said Delegate Vince R. James. “We expect that law to be respected.”

Drawing from historical precedent, the committee pointed to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Morton v. Mancari* (1974), which reaffirmed that the legal recognition of tribes is based on political status, not racial classification. This critical distinction, the Delegate James explained, strengthens the Nation’s legal standing and must remain central in federal policymaking.

Council Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie introduced an amendment to clarify that the Navajo Nation’s government-to-government relationship with the U.S. transcends political administrations and is rooted in enduring treaty and legal obligations.

The amendment calls for a permanent federal-tribal consultation process, reaffirms that federal funding is based on sovereign status rather than race or discretionary programs, and asserts the Nation’s sovereign rights to manage natural resources.

The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee also expressed a commitment to partnership with the federal government, identifying shared priorities such as reducing federal regulatory burdens, streamlining funding mechanisms, strengthening self-determination, and addressing historic tax barriers that continue to limit economic growth on tribal lands.

As part of the next steps, the resolution will be distributed to federal agencies, congressional delegations, and tribal partners. The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee approved the legislation by a vote of 14-0 and serves as the final authority.

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