



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Budget and Finance Committee receives a report from the Navajo Veterans Administration on Veterans Trust Fund



The Budget and Finance Committee received a report on the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget from the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Today, the Budget and Finance Committee (BFC) received a report on the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 (FY2026) budget from the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration (NNVA), which included updates on headcounts, document management, and financial distribution, sparking a wide-ranging discussion among BFC members and NNVA leadership.

“The Budget and Finance Committee heard the Navajo Nation’s veterans’ requests during the FY2026 public hearings and set aside \$3 million to supplement the Veterans Trust Fund distributions,” said BFC Chair Shaandiin Parrish. “Our veterans should not suffer from a lack of communication, and therefore, we are creating a pathway for veterans to continue to submit proper documentation to receive hardship assistance throughout the fiscal year.”

The \$3 million general fund allocation is intended to provide hardship funding for Veterans who submit their documentation during the FY2026, as well as burial assistants and color guard expenses. To complete documentation for hardship assistance, veterans must ensure:

1. Consistent name spelling across documents
2. Matching dates of birth
3. Accurate Social Security numbers
4. Up-to-date DD-214 forms
5. Correct documentation in their files

The required documentation for the general fund assistance is the same as that for the annual Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) interest income distribution. Earlier this year, the Office of the Controller issued a memorandum outlining this year's VTF interest income to be approximately \$8 million.

For this year, CJY-70-23 allowed for an approximate \$320,000 VTF interest income carryover from FY2025. The VTF interest income and the carryover are equal to a total of \$8.3 million. The distribution of these funds is dependent on the veteran count for fiscal year 2026. This year, 5,181 veterans submitted verified documentation across the five agencies. Each Veteran will receive approximately \$1,629.77 in hardship assistance.

During the report, Council Delegate Lester Yazzie voiced sharp concerns over a nearly 60% drop in active veteran records between April and June. He questioned why the NNVA had not acted sooner to address the discrepancy and whether Eastern Agency veterans were being adequately informed about the available funds and services.

"Our veterans deserve real accountability in how we support them," said Council Delegate Lester Yazzie. "The sharp drop in Eastern Agency's veteran count raises serious concerns. It's our responsibility to make sure no veteran is left behind due to paperwork delays or communication failures. The funding is there, but we need the Veterans Administration and leadership to take accountability to communicate this information to our Navajo veterans."

Veterans who were not included in the initial VTF distribution due to incomplete paperwork may still qualify for assistance. By completing and updating their documentation, they can access the additional \$3 million in general funds set aside for hardship support. Each of the five agencies has \$600,000 reserved for this purpose, ensuring that all veterans have another opportunity to receive benefits.

The BFC recommended that the NNVA distribute an official memorandum clarifying that no documents have been purged and that veterans can access available funding. The committee emphasized that communication gaps within the NNVA must be addressed in the next legislative cycle, especially regarding behavioral health services and local outreach.

Efforts are underway to resolve discrepancies through a corrective action plan, digital file centralization, and support at chapter meetings to help veterans update their documentation. If veterans miss the deadline for the VTF, they may still submit accurate documentation and utilize the additional \$3 million set aside in general funds for hardship assistance.

The Budget and Finance Committee accepted the NNVA's report with a vote of four in favor and one opposed.

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