



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 4, 2025

Resources and Development Committee strategizes creation of Navajo Energy Office



The Resource and Development Committee holds strategic work session focused on stand-alone Navajo Energy Office.

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz. — On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) convened a strategic work session to examine the final outcomes of the Tribal Energy and Capacity Development (TEDC) grant and determine the next steps toward establishing a permanent Navajo Energy Office. The work session brought together RDC members, Division of Natural Resources leadership, the Navajo EPA, Office of Legislative Counsel, and consulting team RedStreak LLC, to review regulatory challenges, office structure options, and long-term development strategies.

RDC Chair Brenda Jesus emphasized that companies are approaching various branches of the Navajo Nation without a clear point of entry, resulting in project delays and inconsistent negotiations.

“Projects are coming to the Navajo Nation faster than our internal systems can support. We need a structured Energy Office, so companies are not approaching our government at random. This is about stability, protection of sovereignty, and ensuring our Nation, not outside developers, controls our energy future”, said Chairwoman Jesus.

Vice Chairman Casey Allen Johnson raised concerns about the Nation approving feasibility work and renewable leases despite having no energy tax code, no consistent vetting process, and no oversight body assigned to protect Navajo assets.

Vice Chair Johnson added, “Right now, we’re entertaining major energy proposals without a foundation. There is no tax structure, no vetting system, and no defined oversight. This committee wants a permanent office that can do this work professionally and consistently.”

Delegates expressed that the lack of process clarity has allowed companies to bypass formal channels by contacting individual delegates or departments. RDC members agreed that the current environment is fragmented, unpredictable, and places the Nation at risk of losing future revenue, legal authority, and competitive advantage.

The TEDC grant provided three potential paths forward, establishing the Energy Office within the existing Navajo government structure, creating a stand-alone energy enterprise under Navajo Nation Holdings, or forming a fully independent Navajo Energy Authority.

Delegate Shawna Ann Claw noted that placing the office within the government would leave it vulnerable to political turnover and budget instability saying, “We need an office that protects the Nation from liability. If a project fails or there is litigation, the entire Navajo Nation should not be at risk. An enterprise or authority gives us financial protection, competitive hiring power, and freedom from political turnover.”

Delegate Otto Tso reiterated that the political structure of the government is not suited to manage energy development and noted the Southern Ute Growth Fund model, where tribal leadership is legally prohibited from interfering in business decisions. He stated that adopting a similar model would protect the Energy Office from political bias and allow energy professionals to make decisions based on science, engineering, and economic returns, and not political influence.

RDC members also discussed the economic opportunity behind a fully functional Energy Office. A permanent Energy Office would be responsible for establishing energy taxation, reviewing renewable transmission lines, overseeing revenue agreements, and ensuring that any energy generated on Navajo land benefits Navajo people first.

Delegate Danny Simpson said the Nation needs a centralized authority to vet companies, regulate projects, and enforce strong industry standards.

“We have more than 100 companies ready to work with the Navajo Nation, but no vetting system. A stand-alone Energy Office with full authority will move projects faster, regulate them properly, and generate real revenue for our Nation,” said Simpson.

RDC recommended assembling an independent oversight board composed of qualified professionals in engineering, energy law, regulatory permitting, and finance. The committee also emphasized the need for a public-facing process flow chart for permit reviews, feasibility studies, and 164 approvals, so investors and community members understand every stage of the energy development process.

Chairwoman Jesus closed the work session by reaffirming the committee’s responsibility to move the legislation forward. She stated that RDC will schedule a follow-up strategic work session November 24, 2025 to review the draft bill, finalize the proposed structure, and prepare it for consideration before the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee and the Navajo Nation Council.

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