



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 29, 2026

Council approves supplemental funding for Department of Diné Education funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance



Council delegates discussed budget oversight and funding directives for the Department of Diné Education.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Tuesday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0259-25 authorizing \$2.6 million from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance (UUFB) to address supplemental operational needs for the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education (DODE) for Fiscal Year 2026.

The proposed legislation included a series of directives aimed at strengthening financial accountability, oversight, and long-term planning.

Legislation No. 0259-25, sponsored by Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Chair Vince R. James, was amended during the legislative process to reduce the original funding amount requested and waiving provisions of Title 12 N.N.C. to allow UUFB funds to be used for recurring operational expenses.

"Approval of the legislation was necessary for the ongoing operation of business and a successful outcome for DODE to continue operations on behalf of our Navajo families and children," Chair James said. "I believe approving the legislation will ensure that DODE's work and projects will continue to move forward without any delays or financial issues for our Navajo families and children."

Council Delegates raised concerns regarding DODE's budget practices, operational priorities, and internal controls. Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty questioned the department's repeated reliance on supplemental funding and management of external revenue sources.

"We're constantly supplementing DODE," Crotty said. "If we don't change how this is managed, our children continue to pay the price."

Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton pressed department leadership on unresolved facility and operational issues at youth centers, including heating systems, vehicles, and maintenance concerns.

"If this proposed legislation impacts our children, then these issues should be addressed with a clear plan," Delegate Charles-Newton said.

Council Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie emphasized the need for stronger financial clarity and data-driven budgeting.

"You are in the business of educating our children," Yazzie said. "You need to know your dollars and what it costs per child so we can move forward responsibly."

DODE acting superintendent Claudia Edgwater, reported that funding reductions left the department without sufficient operating funds to cover insurance, utilities, maintenance, and direct youth services beginning October 1, 2025. The approved supplemental funding of \$2.6 million is intended to sustain 17 essential programs serving an estimated 70,000 students across Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, including youth services, language and culture programming, technical assistance to schools, and teacher capacity-building initiatives.

The Council adopted multiple directives to the amended funding proposal. Council Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie motioned for a directive that by the end of the third quarter of FY2026, DODE will be required to hire an accountant responsible for tracking federal, state, and Navajo Nation funds, or submit a report to the Health, Education and Human Services Committee detailing challenges preventing such hiring.

Delegates also motioned to direct the Office of the Controller to coordinate with DODE to confirm fund numbers, account codes, and cost centers, and to establish monthly reconciliation reports to strengthen expenditure monitoring.

The directive included a requirement that DODE to submit a written report detailing funds received from the State of New Mexico and how those funds had been expended over the past five years. Yazzie stipulated that the report is submitted to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee by the end of the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2026.

Additionally, Council Delegate George Tolth adopted a directive requiring DODE to conduct a feasibility study by the second quarter of FY2026 to evaluate the establishment of a student trust fund dedicated to scholarships for Navajo students. Findings and any proposed framework are to be presented to the Navajo Nation Council during the 2026 Summer Session.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0259-25 with a vote of 20 in favor, one opposed, meeting the two-thirds vote requirement. The Navajo Nation Council is the final authority for the legislation.