



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 29, 2026**

### **Navajo Nation calls on U.S. Department of Homeland Security to recognize Navajo Nation–issued identification and orders the expansion of vital records services for Navajo citizens**



**Speaker Crystalline Curley said that Legislation No. 0022-26 strengthens protections to ensure that Navajo citizens are treated with respect and dignity.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Thursday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved Legislation No. 0022-26, sponsored by Speaker Crystalline Curley, calling on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to formally recognize Navajo Nation–issued tribal identification and respect the political status of Navajo citizens.

“This Council is taking a firm stand for our people,” said Speaker Curley. “Navajo citizenship must never be questioned, undermined, or misclassified by any federal agency. We are exercising our sovereignty to protect our citizens and to ensure that our people are treated with dignity and respect wherever they go.”

The legislation also calls on DHS to provide specialized mandatory training for ICE agents to ensure that they are informed and knowledgeable in recognizing tribal identification documents and the political status of Navajo citizens. It further directs the Navajo Nation Office of Vital Records and Identification to expand direct vital records services for Navajo citizens residing on and off the Navajo Nation.

“Many federal ICE agents do not fully understand sovereignty or the government-to-government relationship that exists between Native American tribes and the federal government,” said Navajo Nation Human Rights Office Interim Executive Director Darlene

Womochil. "Our people should not have to live in fear when going to the supermarket. Our students travel for school trips and athletic competitions in urban areas."

Speaker Curley noted that in January 2025, the Council approved a 638 contract providing more than \$1 million in federal funding to support the Office of Vital Records.

In 2021, under former Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, the Navajo Nation entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Customs and Border Protection outlining the requirements for the Office of Vital Records to begin issuing Enhanced Tribal Cards (ETCs), recognized by federal law enforcement.

Council Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie introduced an amendment directing the Office of Vital Records to fully implement the Enhanced Tribal Identification program, adding that she would introduce legislation to allocate funding if more resources are needed.

"We need to secure resources to ensure these identification cards are issued to our people in a timely manner," Delegate Yazzie said.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved Legislation No. 0022-26 with a vote of 19 in favor and none opposed. The Council serves as the final authority on this legislation.

If Navajo citizens have questions or need assistance with matters related to ICE, vital records, or other needs, they are encouraged to call 855-435-7672.

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