



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council passes legislation addressing responsibilities of the Navajo Nation President and executive directors under Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code



Council Delegate George H. Tolth said Legislation No. 0007-26 formalizes in-person delivery of the State of the Navajo Nation Address.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0007-26, requiring in-person delivery of the State of the Navajo Nation Address and strengthening executive accountability under Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code.

Sponsor Council Delegate George H. Tolth said the legislation amends Title 2 to clarify the duties and responsibilities of the Navajo Nation President, with emphasis on delivering the State of the Navajo Nation Address in person at the beginning of the quarterly Council sessions.

Delegate Tolth said the measure responds to concerns raised by Council delegates about executive engagement with the legislative branch. The measure requires the President to present the address in person during quarterly sessions, reinforcing the Council's oversight authority and formalizing expectations for executive attendance.

Co-sponsor Delegate Shawna Ann Claw explained that the legislation required a two-thirds vote because it amends Title 2. She said the Council has increasingly received written reports in place of in-person appearances and that the legislation restores direct engagement between the executive and legislative branches.

Several delegates cautioned that changes to reporting requirements, public notice timelines, or Council procedures must be carefully aligned to avoid limiting future legislative authority.

Chief Legislative Counsel Michelle Espino clarified that current Title 2 provisions require three days' public notice for Regular Council meeting agendas and 24-hour notice for Special Council meetings. Espino said any effort to standardize notice timelines would require explicit amendments to Title 2, underscoring the need to address procedural changes through proper legislative action.

Concerns about the legislation focused on the role of the State of the Navajo Nation Address as a forum for public accountability. Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton said the address is intended not only for reporting but also to allow delegates and the Navajo people to question the President directly. She noted that recent executive actions have tested institutional boundaries, prompting the Council to clarify expectations through code amendments.

Delegate Vince R. James echoed those concerns, citing missed in-person appearances as an accountability issue.

"Our current president hasn't addressed the Council in person five times to deliver the State of the Navajo Nation Address," Delegate James said. "This behavior is unacceptable."

Delegate James said that such practices signal to the public that reduced engagement is acceptable and undermine confidence in leadership.

Council Delegates considered several amendments to refine the legislation, addressing executive reporting language, confirmation procedures, internal controls, and limits on the authority of non-confirmed officials. Delegates also raised questions about confirmation timelines, spending authority, and oversight responsibilities.

Delegate Crotty motioned for an amendment to delegate authority to the Naabik'íyáti' Committee to define the nomination process, addressing concerns about delays in confirming appointed directors.

Law and Order Committee Chair Charles-Newton moved to amend the legislation to prohibit non-confirmed division directors from being issued or authorized to use a Navajo Nation purchase card.

Legal questions regarding the two-thirds vote requirement were also addressed. The Office of Legislative Counsel and the Department of Justice confirmed that amendments to Title 2 require approval by two-thirds of the full Council membership, or 16 votes.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council passed Legislation No. 0007-26 with a vote of 18 in favor and two opposed. The 25th Navajo Nation Council serves as final authority for this legislation.

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