



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Naabik'iyáti' Committee supports confirmation of Sharlene Begay-Platero as Division Director for Economic Development



Council Delegate Danny Simpson (left) sponsor of the legislation is joined by Division Economic Development, Acting Director Sharlene Begay-Platero (right).

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee approved the confirmation of Sharlene Begay-Platero as Executive Director for the Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development (DED), following extensive questioning on her qualifications, leadership approach, and plans to strengthen economic growth across the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Danny Simpson, sponsor of the legislation, expressed his confidence in Begay-Platero's leadership and experience.

"Economic development requires steady leadership and someone who understands both the technical process and the needs of our communities," said Delegate Simpson. "Begay-Platero has demonstrated hands-on leadership, moved key projects forward, and shown a commitment to restoring trust and accountability within the Division."

Begay-Platero, who has served as Acting Director since September, brings 34 years of experience in Navajo Nation economic development. During her confirmation hearing, she outlined the progress made under her leadership and the structural challenges that continue to affect the Division.

According to Begay-Platero, DED approved 35 business site leases over the past calendar year and completed a multi-year reform of its Business Site Leasing administrative and Management plan to streamline the leasing process for entrepreneurs. Begay-Platero also

assisted in executing design and construction contracts for convenience store projects, finalized redevelopment plans, and upgraded its internal technology systems to improve security and efficiency.

Throughout the hearing, members of the Naabik'íyáti' Committee raised concerns about stalled development sites, infrastructure readiness, chapter leasing authority, and community outreach.

Council Delegate Vince R. James raised concerns regarding 700 acres of land that was withdrawn within his chapter region that awaits development. He emphasized the need for clearer timelines, better coordination, and stronger communication between DED and local leadership.

Council Delegate Lester Yazzie requested the status of vacant commercial facilities, including former industrial properties, and emphasized the importance of tenant recruitment, maintenance planning, and safeguarding existing infrastructure.

Delegate Yazzie emphasized that the Nation invests heavily in facilities to generate employment and strengthen local economies, and when major tenants such as the glove factory close, communities immediately feel the consequences.

Begay-Platero explained that DED is actively recruiting tenants for vacant facilities, including the Church Rock industrial park and the former Rhino Glove Factory building. She reported that three interested clients remain engaged. She also described using leasehold improvement agreements that allow tenants to upgrade properties in exchange for lease credits.

Council Delegates Germaine Simonson and Herman M. Daniels Jr. emphasized tourism as a leading economic opportunity for the Navajo Nation, highlighting the need to expand hotel projects in Shonto, Shiprock, Cameron, and Lychee while investing in trails, visitor centers, and recreational amenities. Delegates also pointed to Route 66's historic and scenic corridors as opportunities to capture visitor spending and strengthen long-term tourism infrastructure.

Begay-Platero reported progress on hotel developments in Shonto, Shiprock, Cameron, and LeChee, along with expanded participation in national tourism trade shows to attract more visitors. She also noted partnerships with chapters on leasing education, feasibility studies with Northern Arizona University, and stronger outreach and quarterly performance reporting to improve accountability.

"Begay-Platero's professional approach to employee retention is imperative because employees in any entity are the backbone of its success," said RDC Chair Brenda Jesus. "We expect her to continue building a stable, accountable Division that delivers lasting economic opportunities for the Navajo Nation."

The Naabik'íyáti' Committee voted 11 in favor and five opposed to advance Legislation No. 3026, supporting Sharlene Begay-Platero's confirmation. The legislation now moves forward for final consideration by the Navajo Nation Council.

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