



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2026

Law and Order Committee receives a report from the Navajo Fire Department and announces Title 17 public hearing



The Law and Order Committee received a report from the Navajo Nation Fire Department, Fire Chief John Williams and announced plans for Title 17 public hearings across the Navajo Nation.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — In a recent meeting, the Law and Order Committee (LOC) received a report from Navajo Nation Fire Department Fire Chief John Williams and approved plans to conduct public hearings on proposed amendments to Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code.

The LOC deliberated staffing vacancies, equipment needs, dispatch coordination failures, leadership accountability, and long-term plans for departmental self-sufficiency with Chief Williams.

LOC Vice Chair Nathan Notah emphasized the importance of the committee's continued oversight of the Fire Department's operations.

"The assessments and evaluations we discussed are not just bureaucratic exercises. They ensure accountability and the effective functionality of our Fire Department for our people," said Vice Chair Notah. "We need to know their strengths and weaknesses, so they are fully prepared, fully staffed, and fully supported."

The LOC's reiterated their commitment to ensuring the Fire Department has the resources, personnel, and organizational structure necessary to protect Navajo communities among the Nation's eight active fire stations.

Chief Williams provided a detailed account of the Fire Department's current operational status, including ongoing station renovations, equipment acquisitions, staffing challenges, and plans to modernize the department into a self-sufficient professional organization.

Chair Charles-Newton inquired if exit interviews were being conducted with departing firefighters and made clear that the committee would conduct those interviews directly if the department failed to do so. She stated that the mistreatment of employees would not be tolerated.

Delegate Arbin Mitchell raised concerns about equipment disparities between stations, urging the department to organize its equipment request lists by category, distinguishing between division-wide needs and station-specific requests, to allow for clearer committee review and more equitable distribution of resources.

During his report, Chief Williams elaborated on a systemic problem in which dispatchers wait for police officers to confirm scenes before notifying fire and emergency medical service personnel, which results in response delays of five to 20 minutes in some cases.

The LOC called for immediate corrective action. The committee issued an immediate directive to Navajo Nation Police Chief Ronald Silversmith requiring dispatchers to simultaneously notify fire, emergency medical services, and police personnel for all crash and fire-related emergencies.

The committee voted to accept the Fire Department's report by a vote of three in favor and one opposed.

The LOC also discussed proposed amendments to Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code, which governs criminal and public safety law. The committee voted to initiate a series of regional public hearings across the Navajo Nation beginning in April 2026.

"The Law and Order Committee is committed to strengthening Title 17 to meet the evolving needs of the Navajo Nation," said Chair Charles-Newton. "Our communities have been asking for these updates, and we are moving forward, expanding the code to address not only criminal law, but also illegal dumping, cattle rustling, and violent crimes. These public hearings are an opportunity for our people to see their government in action and to have a voice in the laws that govern and protect them."

The hearings will be scheduled in April 2026, and the locations will be announced on the 25th Navajo Nation Council's Facebook page.

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