



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

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Law and Order Committee advances efforts to address provisions of 1992 Consent Decree



The Law and Order Committee accepted the report on the status of the 1992 Navajo Nation Consent Decree from Department of Corrections.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, the Law and Order Committee (LOC) convened to receive a report on the status of the 1992 Navajo Nation Consent Decree and to outline next steps toward compliance with the Department of Corrections (DOC) regarding facility development and improved staffing.

The report was presented by Navajo Nation DOC Director Dr. Delores Greyeyes and Assistant Attorney General LaTonia B. Johnson.

“The Law and Order Committee remains fully committed to resolving the remaining issues under the 1992 Consent Decree,” said Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton. “That means ensuring new, modern facilities are built in Window Rock and Shiprock, and that our public safety personnel are supported with adequate staffing and competitive wages. Using 638 contracts and strategic funding efforts, we are focused on building a system that meets statutory standards while protecting our communities.”

The 1992 Consent Decree was established to address unconstitutional conditions within Navajo Nation detention facilities, including overcrowding, inadequate healthcare, sanitation issues, and violations of detainee rights.

The decree continues to serve as a legal and operational framework requiring safe, humane conditions, proper staffing, and consistent oversight through monthly reporting to the Window Rock District Court and the Navajo Nation Department of Justice.

During the meeting, the LOC acknowledged significant progress made over the past decade, including the construction of new detention facilities in Crownpoint, Chinle, and Tuba City. These improvements contributed to a partial dismissal of the consent decree in May 2024, with nine of the original eleven compliance areas now closed.

Despite this progress, two critical areas remain unresolved: jail closures and physical facility standards for the Shiprock and Window Rock detention centers.

Assistant Attorney General Johnson emphasized that full dismissal of the consent decree cannot be achieved without the construction of new facilities in these two locations. Current facilities do not meet required space, safety, and infrastructure standards, particularly for long-term detainee housing. As a result, Shiprock and Window Rock remain fully subject to all provisions of the decree.

Council Delegate Arbin Mitchell raised concerns focused on compliance, reporting, and staffing challenges tied to the 1992 Consent Decree. He questioned whether delays in hiring or a lack of applicants contributed to vacancies.

Director Greyeyes clarified that recruitment efforts are effective, but retention remains the primary challenge due to competitive pay and benefits offered by other agencies. On average, staffing of correctional officers falls below mandated staffing levels and creates operational strain.

Committee members discussed utilizing 638 contracts as a pathway to allow for external funding of certain positions and an opportunity to implement higher salary scales. Chair Charles-Newton discussed the need to renegotiate these agreements and explore additional funding sources to sustain long-term staffing solutions.

Further strategies included evaluating the reallocation of funds from long-vacant positions to support salary increases and retention incentives for current employees.

LOC members emphasized that resolving the consent decree is not only a legal obligation but also a critical step toward improving detention conditions, reducing crime, and strengthening community trust.

The Law and Order Committee accepted the report with a vote of four in favor, and none opposed. The Committee will continue to work with key stakeholders, including the Department of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of the Controller, and federal partners, to achieve full compliance with the 1992 Consent Decree.

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