



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Resources and Development Committee concludes public hearings on proposed Title 26 amendments in Western and Northern Navajo Agencies



The Resources and Development Committee concluded its series of public hearings on proposed amendments to Title 26, the Local Governance Act.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On April 8 and 10, the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) concluded its final public hearings on proposed amendments to Title 26, the Local Governance Act, meeting with chapter officials and community members at the Tonalea Chapter House and Walter Collins Center in Upper Fruitland, N.M, to gather input on issues affecting local chapter governance.

As the committee concluded its outreach effort, discussions focused on concerns related to chapter administration, staff authority, and the broader decentralization of local government functions. RDC Chair Brenda Jesus said the hearings have provided a valuable forum for chapter leaders to raise recurring issues and offer recommendations for strengthening chapter governance.

“Throughout the public hearings we’ve conducted, chapter officials have brought forth critical insight and suggestions,” said Chair Jesus. “There have been many concerns addressing bullying, authorities of chapter staff, and decentralization of chapter governments.”

Navajo Nation Department of Justice Assistant Attorney General for the Chapter Unit Rodgerick Begay provided an overview of the Local Governance Act, tracing its development from its adoption in 1998 through its 28-year history.

Begay focused his presentation on the distinctions between LGA-certified and non-LGA-

certified chapters, particularly the authority each holds over financial oversight, chapter staff supervision, the impacts of implementing the Five Management System, and legislative actions taken since the law's original adoption.

Begay also clarified that the proposed amendments to Title 26 are separate from the government reform initiatives currently being undertaken by the Office of Navajo Government Development.

"We are working to amend our existing law, Title 26, in a way that may benefit chapter governments," Begay said. "These proposed LGA amendments are separate from the government reform initiative currently underway."

Begay presented several scenarios for chapter officials to consider, including whether the Five Management System should remain in place, whether chapter officials or community members should supervise chapter staff—particularly the Chapter Manager and Chapter Service Coordinator—and whether all Agency Councils should receive official recognition.

He also outlined two proposed governance models.

Model A would automatically certify the 65 chapters not currently under the Five Management System, granting them the same authorities as governance-certified chapters. The model would also allow chapter officials to supervise staff and permit staff involvement in chapter administration.

Model B would retain the current Five Management System certification process and would not automatically certify the remaining chapters. Those chapters would instead receive limited authority, including contracting authority of \$10,000 or less. It would allow chapter officials to supervise staff based on certification status and limit member participation in management and operations to governance-certified chapters.

Council Delegate Shawna Ann Claw commended chapter officials for their participation and input.

"Your recommendations are important, and seeking clarification on the amendments is valuable," Delegate Claw said. "We encourage you to take this information back to your local chapters and continue the discussion."

Chair Brenda Jesus noted that chapters have consistently called for greater decentralization of government authority.

"Our goal is to move government authority back to the local communities, consistent with the original intent of the LGA," Chair Jesus said. "These hearings were initiated to ensure chapter voices help shape the best path forward."

All RDC members and several delegates participated in the series of public hearings. With the hearings now concluded, the RDC will review public comments and consider advancing the legislation for the 2026 Summer Council Session.

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