



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Naabik'íyáti' Committee holds work session to establish government minimum wage for employees



Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Vince R. James proposed minimum wage adjustments for Navajo Nation government employees.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee held a work session to deliberate Legislation No. 0087-25, establishing a minimum wage for Navajo Nation government employees. The measure is designed to strengthen workforce stability, improve compensation equity, and align wages with regional economic standards.

Chair of the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) and sponsor, Council Delegate Vince R. James proposed amendments to the Navajo Preference in Employment Act to formally establish a Navajo Nation government minimum wage, with implementation tied to cost-of-living adjustments and fiscal planning requirements.

The proposed adjustment sets a minimum wage of \$14.70 per hour for Navajo Nation government employees with annual cost-of-living adjustments beginning in subsequent fiscal years.

James highlighted that the legislation is grounded in long-standing workforce concerns and comparative wage analysis across surrounding states.

"This legislation ensures that Navajo Nation government employees are paid at a fair and comparable rate, and it establishes a foundation for consistent cost-of-living adjustments moving forward," said Chair James.

Speaker Crystalyne Curley echoed the importance of aligning wage discussions with current economic realities and ensuring clarity in implementation.

“We have a responsibility to move beyond discussion and deliver meaningful wage standards that reflect the value of our workforce and the cost of living our employees face every day,” said Speaker Curley.

HEHSC member Dr. Andy Nez underscored the importance of ensuring fairness across employee classifications and long-term workforce retention.

“This increase is long overdue, and I support the intent. We must also ensure that employees who have dedicated years of service are not compressed into the same wage levels without consideration of their experience and progression,” said Delegate Nez.

Helena Nez Begay raised considerations regarding long-term wage sustainability and future adjustments tied to inflation.

“As we move forward with establishing a minimum wage, we also need to understand how often increases will occur and ensure that our employees continue to see meaningful growth over time,” said Delegate Nez Begay.

The legislation establishes a minimum hourly wage of \$14.70 for Navajo Nation government employees and incorporates annual cost-of-living adjustments beginning October 1, 2026, ensuring wages remain responsive to inflation and economic conditions. It will require a comprehensive fiscal impact analysis and a government-wide wage classification study prior to full implementation, allowing leadership to assess budget implications, employee distribution, and long-term sustainability.

Legislation No. 0087-25 emphasizes wage comparability with surrounding states and federal standards, reinforcing efforts to maintain competitive compensation for the Navajo Nation workforce.

Council delegates noted that the legislation represents a phased approach, allowing for future policy discussions regarding broader wage standards across the Navajo Nation.

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