



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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HEHSC approves establishment of Navajo Aging Advisory Commission to strengthen services and advocacy for Navajo elders



The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee and stakeholders following the approval of legislation establishing the Navajo Aging Advisory Commission.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, the Health, Education and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) approved legislation amending the Plan of Operation for the Division of Aging and Long Term Care Support (DALTCS), establishing the Navajo Aging Advisory Commission (NAAC), and approving the commission's policies and procedures to strengthen advocacy, planning, and services for Navajo elders across the Navajo Nation.

The legislation aligns the Navajo Nation's aging services framework with provisions of the Older Americans Act and formalizes an advisory commission dedicated to addressing issues affecting elders, promoting community-based services, and providing recommendations on policies that impact aging populations. The commission will serve as an advisory body to DALTCS and support efforts to ensure elders receive the benefits, services, and support necessary to maintain their dignity, cultural identity, and quality of life.

Under the approved amendments, the Navajo Aging Advisory Commission will advise DALTCS on aging-related policy matters, conduct regular and special meetings, provide opportunities for public participation, and disseminate information on issues affecting elders throughout the Navajo Nation. The commission will also advocate for improved services and strengthen communication between senior centers, communities, and tribal leadership.

Legislation sponsor, Council Delegate George Tolth highlighted the importance of community involvement and local perspectives in shaping elder services.

“Our elders deserve programs and services that reflect their lived experiences and community needs. The Navajo Aging Advisory Commission will help bridge communication between local communities and service providers while ensuring elder concerns remain at the forefront of policy discussions,” said Delegate George Tolth.

HEHSC Chair Vince James emphasized the importance of creating a formal structure to elevate the voices of Navajo elders.

“Our elders carry the knowledge, language, and traditions that define who we are as Diné people. Establishing the Navajo Aging Advisory Commission creates a stronger pathway for elders to be heard, engaged, and represented in decisions that affect their well-being. This action reinforces our commitment to ensuring that elder services remain a priority throughout the Navajo Nation,” said Chair Vince James.

Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez, who co-sponsored the legislation, said this action is a significant leap toward addressing the needs of our seniors across the Navajo Nation.

“This Commission provides a meaningful opportunity to strengthen planning, coordination, and accountability in services for our seniors, especially at a national level. Many elders already participate in accordance with the Older Americans Act, but locally, as a Nation, this is significant. By including elders directly into the conversation, we are establishing a system that is more responsive, culturally grounded, and focused on improving the quality of life for current and future generations,” said Delegate Dr. Andy Nez.

Council Delegate Helena Nez Begay said the commission will help strengthen advocacy efforts and expand opportunities for elders to participate in decision-making processes.

“This legislation recognizes the invaluable role our elders play in preserving our culture and guiding our future. The establishment of the commission creates an avenue for elders to share their knowledge, identify challenges, and help shape solutions that support healthy and independent living across the Navajo Nation,” said Delegate Helena Nez Begay.

The Navajo Aging Advisory Commission will operate within the Navajo Department of Health’s Division of Aging and Long Term Care Support and will assist in coordinating community-based services, promoting elder wellness, and advocating for the needs of Navajo elders throughout the Nation.

The Health, Education and Human Services Committee approved Legislation No. 0111-26 by a vote of four in favor and none opposed. As the legislative oversight committee for the Navajo Department of Health, HEHSC serves as the final authority on the measure.

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