



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 16, 2026

HEHSC approves legislation supporting priority utility hookups for Navajo veteran housing projects



Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Chair Vince R. James sponsored legislation prioritizing utility connections for veteran housing projects.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, the Health, Education and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) approved Legislation No. 0163-26, supporting a request for the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) to prioritize utility hookups for veteran housing projects throughout all five agencies of the Navajo Nation. The legislation, sponsored by HEHSC Chair Vince James, aims to expedite electrical, water, wastewater, and other essential utility connections so completed veteran homes can be occupied without unnecessary delays.

Originally drafted in support of the Northern Navajo Veterans Organization, the legislation was amended to expand its scope to all Navajo veterans organizations, ensuring veterans in every agency of the Navajo Nation are included in the request for prioritized utility services. The amendment followed discussion among committee members regarding similar housing delays affecting veterans in multiple regions.

Council Delegate James said the legislation addresses one of the final barriers preventing veterans from moving into newly completed homes.

“Our veterans have earned the opportunity to live safely in the homes that have already been built for them. Prioritizing utility connections is a practical step that ensures these investments fulfill their intended purpose and allows veterans and their families to move in without unnecessary delay,” said James.

Council Delegate Helena Nez Begay highlighted that veterans in the Western Agency are experiencing similar delays, noting that some have waited nearly a year for utility infrastructure despite having completed homes. She requested the legislation be broadened to include veterans throughout the Navajo Nation and joined the measure as a co-sponsor.

“Veterans throughout the Navajo Nation deserve the same opportunity to occupy their homes as soon as they are completed. Expanding this legislation ensures that no agency is overlooked and that all veterans receive equal consideration,” said Delegate Helena Nez Begay.

Vice Chair Germaine Simonson requested additional information regarding delayed utility connections and asked for updated reports from the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority and the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration to better understand why completed veteran homes remain without service. Committee members also discussed obtaining a comprehensive list of unconnected veteran homes and the specific reasons for each delay to strengthen future oversight efforts.

Chair Pro Tem Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez echoed Vice Chair Simonson’s call for continued oversight regarding delayed utility connections for recipients of homes, especially for any looming deadlines.

“The Committee’s discussion made it clear that there needs to remain continuous monitoring on all completed homes from various programs. Supporting this legislation is an important first step, but continued oversight and accountability will be necessary to ensure these projects reach the families they were intended to serve,” said Nez.

The legislation recognizes that timely utility service is essential to the success of the Navajo Nation Veterans Housing Program and other housing initiatives funded to address longstanding housing needs among Navajo veterans. The committee emphasized that completed homes cannot fulfill their intended purpose until utility infrastructure is operational, making coordination between NTUA, veterans organizations, Navajo Nation programs, and local chapters a priority.

The Health, Education and Human Services Committee approved Legislation No. 0163-26 by a vote of three in favor, none opposed. The Health, Education and Human Services Committee serves as the final authority on the measure.

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