



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 28, 2026

Health, Education, and Human Services strengthens oversight and coordination for Navajo veterans housing



Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Chair Vince James expressed the need for stronger communication and accountability among the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Wednesday, the Health, Education and Human Services Committee reviewed a Navajo veterans housing report addressing construction delays, utility connections, contract spending and the delivery of completed homes to veterans.

HEHSC Chair Vince James said recent meetings demonstrated the need for stronger communication and accountability among the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration, contractors and utility providers.

“The Committee shouldn’t have to bring every entity to the same table to move these projects forward. Every responsible office must communicate, establish firm completion dates and resolve the remaining utility issues. Our veterans should already be living in their homes with electricity and running water,” James said.

The committee received updates from Bitco, the Sparrow Group and the Southwest Indian Foundation on homes constructed or renovated through Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund and American Rescue Plan Act allocations. Contractors reported progress across the Navajo Nation while identifying electrical connections, water infrastructure, rights-of-way, inspections, documentation and contract deadlines as continuing challenges.

Bitco reported delivering 80 homes, including homes designed for remote locations with solar power and water-storage systems. Several homes remain without permanent water and electrical connections.

The Sparrow Group reported working on more than 140 homes, including 56 new homes and 84 renovations. Thirty-five homes are occupied, while 12 completed homes are awaiting electrical connections.

Southwest Indian Foundation reported that 16 veterans have moved into homes under one contract, while additional homes await veteran assignments, authorization to proceed and possible contract modifications.

Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez emphasized the need to protect veterans' privacy while ensuring homes meet construction standards. He also raised concerns about contract extensions, remaining balances and a cease-and-desist notice that halted construction for seven months.

"These funds are for our veterans, surviving spouses and Gold Star families, and the NNVA must maintain resources regardless. We must act quickly on existing contracts and require qualified inspections to ensure a turnkey home is suitable for the recipient. There is no excuse for allowing available housing funds to expire when veterans are still waiting for safe, quality homes," Nez said.

Council Delegate Helena Nez Begay called for a coordinated process that provides veterans and their families with clear information about their housing status.

"Our veterans should not have to repeatedly contact different offices to learn the status of their housing applications or utility connections. The responsible entities must work from the same information, communicate directly with each veteran and remain accountable until every approved home is ready for occupancy," Nez Begay said.

Council Delegate George Tolth requested project-specific information, including status reports, photographs and inspection records, to help address utility delays and construction concerns in communities.

"When a completed home is still waiting for electricity or water, we need to know exactly what is causing the delay so we can follow up immediately," Tolth said. "Contractors and agencies must provide accurate information so we can confirm that each veteran receives a safe and fully functional home."

Council Delegate Curtis Yanito raised concerns about veterans who continue hauling water or living without utilities after their homes have been completed.

"A completed house is not a finished home until the veteran has water, electricity and the keys," Yanito said. "We need timely communication and immediate follow-up before the remaining deadlines pass."

To strengthen oversight, the committee approved a directive beginning in October 2026 requiring the executive director of the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration to provide monthly oral and written reports to HEHSC on the Veterans Housing List, contract expenditures and other applicable information involving Veterans Trust Fund and ARPA housing allocations.

At Wednesday's follow-up coordination meeting, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority representatives agreed to compile contractors' separate project lists and provide a comprehensive status report identifying pending electrical and water work. Contractors were also asked to distinguish between water and electrical delays, verify completed utility applications and establish regular coordination meetings with the Veterans Administration and utility providers.