



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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25th Navajo Nation Council approves legislation to establish Diné Stolen Valor Act



Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton sponsored Legislation No. 0180-26, which amends Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code to establish the Diné Stolen Valor Act.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Wednesday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0180-26, which would amend Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code to establish the Diné Stolen Valor Act. The legislation aims to protect the honor and legacy of Diné veterans and Navajo Code Talkers by preventing individuals from fraudulently claiming military service, honors or Code Talker status to obtain money, employment or other benefits.

“Our Diné veterans and Navajo Code Talkers have served with courage, sacrifice and honor, and their service deserves our highest respect,” said Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton, sponsor of the legislation. “No one should be allowed to falsely claim military service or exploit the legacy of our warriors for personal gain. This legislation strengthens our ability to protect veterans, preserve the integrity of their service and ensure that benefits reach those who have rightfully earned them.”

The Diné Stolen Valor Act would establish criminal penalties and civil remedies for individuals who knowingly misrepresent military service, rank, decorations, combat experience or veteran status to obtain financial or other tangible benefits.

The legislation also specifically protects the legacy of the Navajo Code Talkers, whose use of the Diné language during World War II played a critical role in U.S. military communications. It would prohibit individuals from fraudulently claiming to be Code Talkers, falsely identifying themselves as family members or representatives of Code Talkers, or soliciting donations and benefits through unauthorized claims of association.

Council Delegate Nathan Notah, co-sponsor of the legislation, emphasized the importance of protecting veterans and the resources intended to support them.

“Our veterans earned their recognition and benefits through honorable service, and we have a responsibility to protect what they sacrificed for,” Delegate Notah said. “When individuals falsely claim military service or misuse the legacy of our Navajo Code Talkers for personal gain, they undermine the sacrifices of our warriors. This legislation sends a clear message: the Navajo Nation will stand behind its veterans and protect the benefits they have earned.”

The Navajo Nation, through the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration and other programs, provides trust funds, scholarships, housing assistance, employment and contracting preferences, and other resources to eligible Diné veterans and their families. Fraudulent claims can divert these limited resources from eligible veterans and undermine public trust in veterans’ programs.

Modeled in part on the federal Stolen Valor Act of 2013, the proposed Diné Stolen Valor Act would provide additional protections addressing fraudulent claims involving Navajo Code Talkers and Navajo Nation veterans’ programs.

Under the legislation, a criminal conviction could result in up to one year in jail, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both. Additional penalties could include restitution and forfeiture of fraudulently obtained benefits. Individuals, families, organizations and Navajo Nation programs harmed by fraudulent claims could also pursue civil remedies.

The legislation requires proof that an individual knowingly made a fraudulent claim with the specific intent to obtain money, property, employment or another tangible benefit. It also protects truthful statements, journalism, education, historical reenactments, artistic performances and ceremonial recognition. Errors, exaggerations or false statements alone would not constitute violations without fraudulent intent to obtain a benefit.

The proposal follows a formal request from the Northern Navajo Veterans Organization, which urged the Navajo Nation Council to establish protections against stolen valor to preserve the integrity of military service and safeguard veterans’ trust funds and benefits.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0180-26 on the consent agenda by a vote of 21 in favor and none opposed. Once certified and delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren will have ten days to consider the resolution.

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