



Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

21st Navajo Nation Council overrides President Shirley's vetoes and appropriates additional funding

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The 21st Navajo Nation Council exerted its power by overriding two vetoes by Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., approved legislation that appropriated supplemental funding in the amount of \$3,604,000 from the Unreserved-Undesignated Fund, and confirmed several judges to the Navajo Nation District Courts during their special session on Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2007 at the Navajo Nation Council Chamber in Window Rock, Ariz.

Legislation No. 0764-07 overrode President Shirley's veto of Navajo Nation Council Resolution No. CO-37-07 by a vote of 65-15. This override was sponsored by the Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/ Pinedale) and it involved the Navajo Government Development Act of 2007, which was initially approved by the Council on Oct. 16, 2007 with a vote of 62-19.

This legislation approved amendments to the Commission and the Office of Navajo Government Development within Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code. This legislation proposes that the Office of Navajo Government Development be placed under administrative control of the Office of the Speaker.

This legislation arose after several concerns were raised by Navajo Nation Council Delegates and members of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee (IGR) to address certain measures. The Council would like to refocus the operation of the Office of Navajo Government Development.

Speaker Morgan explained that the IGR contends that the office is being ineffective with no real reform and it is definitely a Council concern that needs immediate action.

The Council has no desire to abolish the office, but plans to reignite the true intent of the operation and focus on improving the department. There has been no reform in this office and the Council questioned the intent and the department's purpose.

The Office of Navajo Government Development was supposed to be the new catalyst for the tribe when it was established in 1989, but it never occurred. The Council has been funding this department for nearly 20-years.

Council Delegate Leonard Chee (Birdsprings/Leupp/Tolani Lake) said that "the amount of years and money that has been put into this office does not add up – there's been little progress in bringing government reform to our nation."

In other Council action today, Legislation No. 0788-07 was passed by a vote

of 69-14 and overrode a second veto by President Shirley. This legislation was sponsored by Tom Lapahe (Tachee/Blue Gap/Whippoorwill).

This legislation involves the Navajo Nation Business-site leasing regulations and empowers the Economic Development Committee to help streamline the business-site leasing process and make things easier for prospective businesses on the Navajo Nation.

Legislation No. 0689-07 also passed by a vote of 79-1. This legislation was sponsored by Lawrence T. Morgan. This legislation relates to education and finance and amended the Navajo Nation 2008 fiscal year budget to appropriate \$495,000 to the Dept. of Education's Bishop Optical 2007-2008 Eyeglass Project.

The initial supplement appropriation was \$495,000, but additional legislation caused it to increase to \$3,604,000. These appropriations will be taken from the Unreserved-Undesignated Fund balance.

The Unreserved-Undesignated Fund Balance was \$10,176,516 before the special session began and after the \$3,604,000 appropriations, the new balance was \$3,604,400.

Additional appropriations were made to the Office of the Speaker for \$1,915,000; the Navajo Nation Council for \$100,000; the Office of the President for \$250,000; and the Navajo Nation Chapters for \$844,400. The appropriations totaled \$3,604,000 at the end.

The total appropriations of nearly \$3.6 million will be used for direct services, which include funds for financial assistance to Navajo constituents through Council Delegates, funds to assist Navajo constituents for financial hardship, funds for various emergencies, burial assistance, youth education, youth enrichment, and for contributions and sponsorships to various activities.

In addition, 110 Navajo Nation Chapters will receive a total of \$844,400 in appropriation funds to be used for stipend payments for official meetings and \$110,000 for Christmas activities at \$1,000 per chapter. The funds are to be provided directly to the chapters as budgeted.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Pueblo Pintado/Torreon/Whitehorse Lake) spoke up against the additional appropriations and argued that this is the Navajo people's money and that we need to use it in a wise fashion and not as a Christmas gift.

"We are talking about eye glasses for kids," Tsosie said. "We are hurting this legislation by adding these other items."

Delegate Young Jeff Tom (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake) responded to Tsosie by informing the Council that this money is greatly needed and is going to be used for direct services to the Navajo people.

In other Council action today, the Council appointed several District Court judges to permanent appointments. The judges included: Irene S. Black, Genevieve Woody, Rudy I. Bedonie, and Carol K. Perry. This legislation was sponsored by Kee Allen Begay (Many Farms/Round Rock).

Irene S. Black was confirmed by a vote of 65-0, Genevieve Woody was confirmed by a vote of 62-0, Rudy I. Bedonie was confirmed by a vote of 46-19, and Carol K. Perry was confirmed by a vote of 56-7.

For more information, contact Joshua Lavar Butler with the Office of the Speaker at 928-871-6384.