



## The 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Health and Social Services Committee disappointed with IHS efforts regarding proposed Thoreau Clinic

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – The Health and Social Services Committee of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council met during a regular meeting on Feb. 9 and accepted a report on the status of the Indian Health Services Thoreau Clinic in Thoreau, N.M.

The committee accepted the report from Bennie Yazzie of the Gallup Indian Medical Center with a 4-0 vote. However, Bennie Yazzie and the Navajo Area Indian Health Services (NAIHS) Director John Hubbard, the agents responsible for funding the construction of the Thoreau Clinic, were not present to address the exact status of the proposed project.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Thoreau) appeared before the committee expressing frustration and disappointment due to the lack of presence of key members from the NAIHS.

Council Delegate Yazzie informed committee members of the need to continually pressure IHS because if pressure is relieved, money for this project could possibly be utilized for other projects. He requested a directive by the committee to help speed up the process.

“This is an on-going project that took almost four years now to plan,” Yazzie said. “Our community members as well as those from surrounding areas are anxiously waiting for health care services. I addressed the Indian Health Services administration last year in September and a date was given by IHS that construction would start in November. We were excited about the news. However, there is no construction at the moment.”

Martha Ellison, legislative advisor for the Health and Social Services Committee, had to contact NAIHS Director John Hubbard by phone to learn of the status of the project and said there was a mix up of projects between the proposed Thoreau Clinic and Tohatchi Clinic.

“The Thoreau Clinic is fully funded,” said Ellison on behalf of Hubbard. “IHS is at the stage of negotiating with the contractor and that process should be done by Feb. 18. Thereafter, construction should begin. On Feb. 23, a report will be given to the committee. I just spoke with Hubbard; there is a mix up between Thoreau and Tohatchi.”

Council Delegate Yazzie has been working on this project since he was elected into office by his constituents and said he is willing to come back to every HSSC meeting until he sees cooperation with NAIHS and heavy equipment in Thoreau.

“I am willing to come back during the next meeting. I’m willing to attend every meeting until we see heavy equipment in Thoreau. I ask for your support and appreciate the time you have given me,” said Yazzie.

Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water/Aneth/Red Mesa) made a directive to visit the proposed site and meet with other parties of the project.

"The party -- Indian Health Services -- is not here. So the questions we have can't be answered," said Filfred.

"We need to hear from IHS and defer this meeting at the site. It would be great to hear from chapter officials too," said Council Delegate Alice Benally (Crownpoint/Nahodishgish). "I think that is the direction we can take."

"I see this whole process as a vehicle," said Edmund Yazzie. "IHS is stuck in the mud. As a committee, we are trying to help by pushing IHS out of the mud."

The committee scheduled a regular meeting on Feb. 23 at the Thoreau Chapter to hear updates from NAIHS, Thoreau Chapter and other parties involved in the construction process of the Thoreau Clinic.

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