



February 19, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Navajo Nation Council

Contact: Alastair L. Bitsoj, Public Information Officer

Phone: (928) 871-7228

Cell: (928) 255-2943

Fax: (928) 871-7255

pio@yahoo.

.navajonationcouncil.

Office of Legislative Counsel Amendment Act will strengthen Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Government Services Committee of the Navajo Nation Council met today during a special meeting and passed legislation to override President Joe Shirley Jr.'s vetoes on resolutions passed by the Navajo Nation Council limiting Diné Fundamental Law to the Peacemaking Court and increasing the authority of the Office of Legislative Counsel.

The Government Services Committee passed Legislation No. 0080-10, which limits Diné Fundamental Law, with a 5-1 vote and passed Legislation No. 0081-10 with a 6-0 vote to increase the authority of the Office of Legislative Counsel. A special session is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 23.

Chief Legislative Counsel Frank Seanez said the Office of Legislative Counsel Amendments Act of 2010 will strengthen the Navajo Nation and its ability to address legal challenges.

"The Act will require that the Legislative Branch receive notice of all lawsuits brought against the Navajo Nation," Seanez explained to the Government Services Committee

"The Office of Legislative Council will have the ability to advise the Navajo Nation Council, the standing committees, its boards, commissions and offices of all litigation brought against the Navajo Nation," he said. "This will strengthen the ability of the Navajo Nation to address all such lawsuits."

"The amendment would allow the Office of Legislative Counsel to immediately address any lawsuits against the Legislative Branch," Seanez added. "This will prevent the recurrence of situations historically experienced wherein the lack of representation by the Office of Attorney General has led to negative consequences to the Navajo Nation."

Seanez also said the act will allow for the Office of Legislative Counsel to provide legal opinions to the Legislative Branch entities addressing its operations.

"This will cure the deficiencies currently encountered when Legislative Branch entities seek legal opinions from the Office of the Attorney General, which the Attorney General is unable to or reluctant to address," Seanez explained. "Legislative Branch officials and employees will be able to rely upon the legal opinions of the Chief Legislative Counsel in taking action on behalf of the Navajo Nation."

Another important feature of the act is allowing the Office of Legislative Counsel to contract with outside attorneys when the office has inadequate internal resources or during conflicts of interests when addressing legal matters.

"The act will address the current situation, wherein the Attorney General has been unable or reluctant to provide legal representation to Legislative Branch entities and it will strengthen the Navajo Nation to

- more -

provide legal representation in conflict of interest matters," Seanez explained. "The Office of Legislative Counsel will continue to coordinate its legal advice and legal representation with the Office of Attorney General. Historically, the Office of the Attorney General has been unable or unwilling to provide adequate legal advice and legal representation to the Legislative Branch."

The act will strengthen the ability of the Navajo Nation to address legislative matters and provide more legal services to the Legislative Branch from the Office of Legislative Counsel.

###