



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

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February 22, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health and Social Services Committee pass bill to give funds to Senior Centers and hear report on Title V for '638 hospitals

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - The Health and Social Services Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council met Feb. 22 and passed legislation regarding the renovation of three Navajo Chapter Senior Centers and heard and accepted a report from the Association of Indians for Self-Determination in Healthcare through Title V contracting.

Legislation No. 0657-09, sponsored by Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Thoreau), passed the Health and Social Services Committee (HSSC) with a 4-0 vote and it pertains to approving and accepting money in the amount of \$20,000 for Thoreau Chapter Senior Center from the New Mexico State's Aging and Long-Term Services Department.

Legislation Nos. 0067-10 and 0068-10, both sponsored by Council Delegate Harry Claw (Chinle), also relates to approving and accepting money in the amount of \$4,500 for Nageezi Chapter Senior Center and \$12,660 for Upper Fruitland Senior Center from the Aging and Long-Term Service Department.

Council Delegate Henry Claw said the funds will be used for the renovation of the senior centers as well as for equipment for the Nageezi and Upper Fruitland Senior Centers.

Council Delegate Yazzie affirmed Claw's state on the importance of these monies and said, "What will be done is adding bigger space for the elderly such as providing more space for arts and crafts at the Thoreau Senior Center. It's quite an honor to see our elders keeping a high-esteem in our area. I will let our senior citizens know of the legislation being passed."

In other related efforts, the Association of Indians for Self-Determination in Healthcare provided a report to the HSSC on the exploratory efforts toward Title V compacting under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Public Law 93-638.

Recently, Public 93-638 Title 1 hospitals on the Navajo Nation have considered proceeding to the upper echelon of self-determination and self-governance on the delivery of health care services. These PL 93-638 hospitals include the Tuba City Health Care Corporation in Tuba City, Ariz., the Winslow Indian Health Care Center Inc., in Winslow, Ariz., and the Utah Navajo Health Care System Inc. in Montezuma Creek, Utah.

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Wilfred Jones, Board president of the Association of Indians for Self-Determination in Healthcare, said the reason why the PL 93-638 hospitals are considering going Title V is to strengthen sovereignty and support services provided by the Navajo Nation '638 tribal organization.

Donna Singer, chief executive officer of the Utah Navajo Health Care System Inc., said this initiative to strengthen sovereignty is important to the Navajo Nation.

"We really support this effort. We can approve statistically that Navajo health care is improving," Singer said. "If we can open this door and we can expand health care for the Navajo Nation, a real positive move."

By declaring Title V status, '638 Navajo Nation hospitals and clinics will be able to increase flexibility in program design, reduced reporting and Indian Health Services oversight on programs and modified regulatory control. It will also increase the Navajo Nation's participation in Office of Self Governance as an advocate in the compact negotiation and advocate and plan with other self governance tribes.

Council Delegate Evelyn Acothley (Bodaway-Gap/Cameron/Coppermine) said there will be lots of questions involved in this process as a resolution is to be drafted by the Navajo Nation Council to grant this Title V process.

"The questions before the committee are that the 638 provider associations want to proceed to the next level of Title V," Acothley said when mentioning her attendance to a Title V boot camp hosted by the Association of Indians for Self Determination in Healthcare. "Today, from the report, is more of an education to the committee on what Title V is about."

"The Navajo Nation Council authorized PL 93-638 to 2015, so we need to make a request to the Navajo Nation Council to go to Title V," added Acothley.

A few areas of concern were expressed by the committee, which will require further research, and will be discussed at the March 10 work session in Flagstaff, Ariz.

Considering that consolidated healthcare of smaller tribes and urban have a greater degree of success in Title V compacting, "Will it work for Navajo" was a question raised by the HSSC.

Title V means direct dealing with the IHS Headquarters, and currently Navajo Area IHS has that role. Title V could bring significant changes to the Navajo Nation health care system by creating several contact points. Another concern is Navajo '638 contracting is still in its infancy stage since its inception in 2002 as a pilot project and was authorized by the Navajo Nation Council in 2005.

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