



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

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## Navajo Nation Chapters supported amendments to Diné Fundamental Law

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Various Navajo Nation Chapters across the Navajo Nation, particularly in the Western Agency, passed resolutions long before the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council passed legislation amending the use of Diné Fundamental Law according to Navajo Nation Council Delegate Leonard Chee (Birdsprings/Leupp/Tolani Lake).

During the 2010 winter session, the Navajo Nation Council passed the Diné, Diné Law and Diné Government Act of 2009 amending the 2002 passage of Diné Fundamental Law. The resolution was vetoed by President Joe Shirley Jr., and on Feb. 23, the Navajo Council overrode the veto by a vote of 69-11 making the amendments Navajo Nation law.

In 2003 and 2004, Navajo Nation Chapters passed resolutions recommending amendments or the possible repeal of the Diné Fundamental Law. The chapters included: LeChee Chapter, Inscription House Chapter, Kayenta Chapter, Coppermine Chapter, Chinle Chapter, as well as the Western Navajo Agency Council -- which consists of all chapter officers, grazing committee members and Navajo Nation Council delegates located within that agency.

The chapter resolutions stated Diné Fundamental Law violates Subsection 4 of Title 1 of the Navajo Bill of Rights, which prohibits the Navajo Nation Council from passing law that establishes a religion. Further, the resolutions assert the implementation of these laws violate the principals of traditional Navajo religion, which should be learned, practiced and educated to a few chosen individuals.

Council Delegate Leonard Chee said the people forecasted the effects of Diné Fundamental Law when legislation was passed by the 19<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council.

“The people foresaw some issues and problems of implementing Diné Fundamental Law back in 2002,” Chee said. “Sure enough, these issues and concerns the people voiced have surfaced recently causing problems.”

The Navajo public and tribal leaders witnessed the abuse of the Diné Fundamental Law by the Navajo Nation Supreme Court, the courts of the Navajo Nation and by President Joe Shirley Jr.

According to the Navajo Nation Code, Diné Fundamental Laws should only be used in the absence of written laws of the Navajo Nation -- this was not the case on several matters the Nation faced with its misinterpretation and misuse.

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