



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health, Social Services Committee hear status report on audit of Navajo Area Agency on Aging

Committee expresses concern of possible shutdown, merging of senior centers with small elder populations

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Health and Social Services Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council met with the Navajo Division of Health regarding a report prepared by Division Director Anslem Roanhorse.

One of the main issues in the report was the status of the Navajo Area Agency on Aging (NAAA) Audit Report from the Navajo Nation's Auditor General. The NAAA is a subdivision within the Navajo Division of Health.

The Auditor General's report revealed that the Navajo Division of Health did not implement 7 out of 10 "outstanding corrective measures" in the NAAA. The corrective measures consist mostly of having an educated and sound workforce within the NAAA subdivision. The lack of these corrective measures has dramatically affected the Navajo Division of Health's effort to provide services to the elderly population on the Navajo Nation.

The committee expressed their concerns after hearing that the Navajo Division of Health is considering the shut down or merging of senior centers that have small elder populations. At Sheep Springs NM for example, the supervisor had retired and the issue there is whether or not to merge Sheep Springs and Naschitti Senior Centers. This recommendation had the committee concerned because the elderly population is simply forgotten, particularly the rural citizens of these communities.

Council Delegate Evelyn Acothley (Bodaway-Gap/Cameron/Coppermine) stated that the elderly cannot be eliminated services and questioned why the NAAA and its seven corrective measures were not yet implemented? The issue with NAAA not implementing the corrective measures goes back to 2005 and it still remains in the same state today.

Acothley added, "The elderly are a prime state of knowledge and should not be delayed any services."

In addition to the seven measures not being implemented, the job vacancies of 48 positions are an issue of concern. Council Delegate Alice Benally (Crownpoint/Nahodishgish) shared Acothley's concerns.

"The job vacancies will continually affect the delivery of services to the elderly populations," Benally said. "As for retired positions, I don't want to see any disruptions in services. We want services to be continued -- not ended."

The committee approved the report with a vote of 6-0.

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