



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

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### **Navajo Council concludes 2010 winter session, approves changes to usage of Diné Fundamental Law**

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*-- Raymond Joe, Navajo Nation Council delegate*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – The 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council concluded its 2010 winter session today by approving the Foundation of the Diné, Diné Law and Diné Government Act of 2009.

Legislation No. 0543-09, sponsored by Council Delegate Raymond Joe (Tachee/Blue Gap/Whippoorwill), passed by a vote of 56-17. With the amendment, Diné Fundamental Law will only be used in the Peacemaking Courts of the Navajo Nation Judicial system. The fundamental laws will not apply to cases entertained by the Navajo Nation District and Supreme Courts.

"The purpose of this legislation is not to change the entire Diné Fundamental Laws, but to prevent the way these laws are currently interpreted, which is against one another," Joe said. "We can use the fundamental laws in a proper way with this legislation. The way the law has been interpreted is abusive to our songs and prayers. It's vital that we don't abuse these laws."

Most Council delegates favored Joe's legislation as it specified the peacemaking court as the system to utilize the fundamental laws. The specialization to the peacemaking court eliminates confusion with the statute-driven adversarial system. Essentially, the passage of Joe's legislation will prevent the manipulation of the fundamental laws in the adversarial system and is a step to help restore a harmonious state among the three branches of our tribal government.

Council Delegate Alice W. Benally (Crownpoint/Nahodishgish) echoed words to confirm Joe's passage of the legislation.

"These traditional values from the fundamental laws are morals that should guide us to harmony. I am thankful the fundamental laws will apply to the peacemaking division. In peacemaking, people are restored back to harmony," Benally explained. "In situations where there is no resolution in normal courts, dispute resolution is another option -- it does work."

In other Council action, Legislation No.0559-09, sponsored by Sampson Begay (Jeddito/Steamboat/Low Mountain), confirmed Tom Platero as Division Director of the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation with a 46-2 vote.

Legislation No. 0573-09, sponsored by Charles Damon (Bahaali/Church Rock), passed 41-4 to reinstate Glynn M. Stump as an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation.

Legislation No. 0559-09, sponsored by Leslie Dele (Tonalea) and Lena Manheimer (Ts'ah Bii Kin/Navajo Mountain), failed by a vote of 12-43. The legislation would have created the Navajo Nation Solid Waste Fund.

Three items remained on the agenda and were not entertained because of a lack of a quorum. Legislation No. 0765-09, regarding the name change of Standing Rock Chapter to Tse' ii' Ahi Chapter; Legislation No. 0758-09, relating to enacting the Navajo Nation Internet Sex Offenses Act of 2009 and Legislation No. 0673-09 pertaining to amending Title 5 of the Navajo Nation Code by Approving Amendments to the Navajo Nation Limited Liability Company Act will most likely reappear on the next regular session agenda as new agenda items.

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