



## The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Council meets for day two of summer session

*Navajo Nation to purchase Inn of Gallup, formerly Holiday Inn*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — In its second day of the 2008 Summer Session, the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council took action on several pieces of legislations including approval of the purchase of the Inn of Gallup in the city's west side.

The Council voted to approve Legislation No. 0090-08 by a vote of 55-21 that approved the \$6.6 million hotel purchase. Council Delegate Lawrence R. Platero, representing the Tohajilee Chapter, urged support of the bill saying the hotel will undergo renovations that will increase the value and the competitiveness of the hotel with other area hotels. The bill also appropriated \$2.6 million for improvements to the hotel – formerly the Holiday Inn located at 2915 West Highway 66.

The 212-room hotel with convention facilities will be operated by Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise. With the development of the first Navajo Nation casino a few miles east of Gallup, some council delegates said the hotel could have good feeder potential to bring traffic to the new casino by a hotel shuttle service.

In other legislation, the Council considered an act pertaining to how the appointment of people to the Board of Education would be handled. The Council voted down the bill — Legislation No. 0190-08 — by one vote, 58-23. The measure required at least 59 votes to pass.

Council Delegate Katherine Benally, Dennehotso, said the Board of Education was established to address certain standards, curriculum, certification of teachers and research.

"I didn't foresee a clash between the committee and the board," Benally said.

Also, Legislation No. 0039-08 was a referendum that would have imposed term limits for council delegates and the speaker of the Council failed to pass by a vote of 16-56. The legislation sponsored by Pete Ken Atcity, Shiprock, would have limited delegates to four consecutive terms, or a total of 16 years. A delegate could take a term off at that point and run for office after four years.

"It's the greatest form of democracy," said Leonard Tsosie (Pueblo Pintado/Torreón/Whitehorse Lake). He said the legislation is compatible with Diné Fundamental Law, but other council delegates thought otherwise. Several council delegates felt that an initiative of this sort should come from the Navajo people. Council delegates represent their



From left, former Speaker Ed T. Begaye, former Navajo Nation President and Speaker Kelsey Begaye, former Speaker Nelson Gorman Jr. and current Navajo Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan.  
(Photo by Bronson Peshlakai)

constituents and this legislation was seen as movement towards limiting the Navajo people's voice in their government.

Legislation No. 0145-08 related to human services to establish the Division of Diné Veterans Services failed to have a second motion and wasn't considered by the Council.

The Council voted 61-11 to pass Legislation No. 0276-08, an appropriations bill of \$975,000 to the Navajo Preparatory School for the completion of the boys' dormitory.

Several amendments were added bringing the total appropriations on the legislation to total \$6,710,215. The Office of the Speaker had \$2,165,000 and \$500,000. The Diné Power Authority was appropriated \$750,000 and \$1,674,516 was appropriated to the Office of the Controller

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie opposed giving money to the Controller's office, which would be used to purchase computer hardware used to print checks. Tsosie's contention was to wait until the budget session, but council delegates approved the amendment to the bill anyway.

The Council, despite a presidential executive order discouraging divisions from soliciting funds, approved the measure. The Undesignated-Unreserved Fund Balance was \$9,458,045 before appropriations were made.

As part of the amendments proposed by Young Jeff Tom, a measure to hire a special investigator to look into matters regarding the BCDS, the Biochemical Decontamination Systems based in Shiprock, N.M., that caused a \$2.2 million write-off that the Navajo Nation had to absorb financially passed by a vote of 63-11. The special investigator will also look into other questionable business ventures, including the OnSat Network Communications deal. The Navajo Nation was billed for far more than it needed to and many questions remain unanswered regarding improper payments to the company.

During a July 16 special session, council members made a directive to the Speaker's Office to hire a special prosecutor to look into the Navajo Nation's outstanding legal matters regarding several questionable deals that went wrong.