

July 23, 2009

Navajo Nation Council completes final day of 2009 Summer Session

Council confirms district court judge of the Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - The 21st Navajo Nation council convened for the fourth and final day of its 2009 Summer Session and celebrated the appointment of Cynthia Thompson as a probationary district court judge of the Navajo Nation.

The session began with legislation No. 0069-09 sponsored by Hon. Charles Damon (Baahaali/Church Rock) related to economic development and resources approved the purchase of lot 5 of the Juniper Hills Light Industrial subdivision located in Gamerco, New Mex. for the sum of \$375,000 plus \$1,958 estimate closing costs for a total amount of \$376,959 utilizing the land acquisition fund.

"The land is going to be used to build a technology data center," said Damon. "It's for our children that need technology."

Harold Skow director of the Navajo department of information and technology provided the council with a slide presentation. "We really want this land to purchase a building for all our servers to be housed in because our current building is unsuitable," said Skow. "With the new building we will be able to protect the Navajo Nation's technology investments."

The presentation outlined some benefits of the proposed technology data center which included providing the following; a centralized Navajo Nation network hub, high speed connection, access to a tier 3 data center, increased services to the Navajo Nation and a safeguard for all Navajo Nation data.

Most delegates supported the legislation and declared that the purchase would prompt economic development. "I say that we go on with this purchase because the legislation promotes economic development," said Edmund E. Yazzie (Thoreau). "The land is prime and located in the Gallup area."

In agreement with Yazzie's comments was Young Jeff Tom (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake). "We need to help assist the Navajo people and use the land acquisition funds to help the people with this purchase," said Tom. The legislation was passed by the council with a vote of 41-20.

Next on the agenda was legislation No. 0167-09 sponsored by Hon. Amos F. Johnson (Forest Lake) related to an emergency and was passed unanimously with a vote of 64-0.

The legislation grants Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr to release any documents expressing gratitude for the passing of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 signed by President Barack Obama on March 30.

Seated in the audience were family members of the late specialist four E-4 Huskie Yazzie Begay as the next legislation No. 0316-09 sponsored by Hon. Amos Johnson was presented to council.

This legislation related to human services recommended and supported the awarding posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor to specialist four E-4 Huskie Yazzie Begay Ten, US 67124010 U.S. Army for distinguishing himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in military operations in Vietnam on Feb. 4, 1968.

Ten was mortally wounded in action by a grenade while shielding his comrades from the blast. It is for this reason Ten is being considered for the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration a member of the United States Military can receive.

"Specialist Ten really deserves the Congressional Medal of Honor and we ask for council's support not only for his family but for the Nation," said Jerry Bodie (Sanostee).

Although council delegates were in favor of the legislations intended propose, consensus among the delegates was that congressional support would carry this legislation forward through congress more efficiently.

Sampson Begay (Jeddito/Steamboat/Low Mountain) recommended an amendment to the legislation and suggested that Senator John McCain (R - AZ), Senator Jon Kyl (R - AZ) and Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D - AZ) carry out the intent of this legislation.

The legislation passed with two amendments by a vote of 67-0.

The first amendment requested for Senator John McCain (R - AZ), Senator Jon Kyl (R - AZ), and Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D - AZ) to assist the Navajo Nation in advocating for the award.

The second acknowledged the Navajo Nation's support of resolutions and documents attached within the legislation.

Next, legislation No. 0370-09 sponsored by Hon. Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) passed with no discussion with a vote of 57-0. This legislation was related to an emergency and confirmed the appointment of George Apachito to serve on the Eastern Navajo Land Commission.

In other new business, legislation No. 0368-09 sponsored by Hon. Raymond Joe (Tachee/Blue Gap/Whippoorwill) related to an emergency to restore the foundation of the Diné to the Diné repealing 1 N.N.C §§ 201-206.

In his presentation to the council Raymond Joe explained the laws initial intent, "In the beginning the law was clear and thought out, the language was clear and it had propose in that our tradition and way of life would be understood," said Joe. "This law is still good but people are misusing it, misinterpreting it and abusing it today."

Katherine Benally (Dennehotso) expressed her concerns, "Our elders and ancestor never intended for our language to be put into writing and used against us," said Benally. "My biggest concern is that this law the way it is being implemented hurts women and children."

"Many judges do not have knowledge or limited knowledge of our language and culture therefore they call on others to interpret and the outcome of those decisions are inconsistent from district to district," added Benally.

The legislation was tabled until the fall session with a vote of 48-21.

Lastly, the council concluded its summer session by reviewing legislation No. 0369-09 sponsored by Hon. Nelson Gorman, Jr. (Chinle). This legislation related to an emergency confirmed the appointment of Cynthia Thompson as a probationary district court judge of the Navajo Nation.

Cynthia Thompson, a 2005 graduate of Northern Arizona University studying criminal justice and administration addressed the council. "I started my career and I learned a lot from it," said Thompson. "I have volunteered in many organizations and have served on several boards and I often ask myself how I am going to help my Navajo people."

The legislation was strongly supported by council and passed with a vote of 57-0. This concluded the end of the Navajo Nation Council's 2009 Summer Session.

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