



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

Contact: Joshua Lavar Butler, Communications Director

Phone: (928) 871-6384

Cell: (928) 255-2946

Fax: (928) 871-7255

joshualavarbutler@navajo.org

joshualavarbutler@yahoo.com

www.navajonationcouncil.org

June 30, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Commission to curb racism and discrimination against Navajos approved unanimously by Navajo Council

Council votes down \$125,000 appropriation for rodeo sponsorship

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — In an act to improve race relations and investigate civil rights infractions against Navajo people by non-Natives, the 21st Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved legislation to establish the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Plan of Operation on June 30 — a measure sponsored by the Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan.

While meeting in a special session, the Council discussed the need to protect Navajo people from discriminatory acts, especially for Navajo residents who live in border towns such as Gallup, N.M., Flagstaff, Ariz., and Farmington, N.M.

"It really gets to the heart when non-Navajos and non-Natives really put us down in border towns," said Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto). "I believe this commission will be the avenue and that will give the Navajo people a way to address racism. It will also address the racism that occurs inside the reservation boundaries."

Council Delegate Leonard Anthony (Shiprock) told the Council that it is important that the Navajo Nation exercise its own authority and power to protect the human rights of its own people.

"As elected officials we see and listen and observe through the conduct of the non-Indian folks who continue to practice discrimination," Anthony said. "We need to exercise our rights of the Diné people on behalf of this legislation."

The measure established a purpose of the commission to conduct public hearings in or near border towns to assess the state of affairs between the Navajo people and non-Natives. The commission is also directed to investigate written complaints involving discrimination of Navajo citizens and to network with local, state, national and international groups and advocate for the recognition of Navajo human rights.

The bill directs the commission to consist of five commissioners to be appointed by the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council and confirmed by the Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council. The members are to be a diverse group of professionals in the following fields: Education, Business, Law Enforcement, Social Services and one member to be an at-large Navajo Nation member.

The commission is to operate under the legislative oversight of the IGR Committee of the Navajo Nation Council.

In other legislative business, the council voted 54-14 to not pass a bill that would have appropriated \$125,000 as a grant to the All Indian Rodeo Cowboys Association Inc. from the Unreserved-Undesignated Fund Balance for the sponsorship of the 50th Annual AIRCA Rodeo and the Third Annual International Indian Finals Rodeo.

The legislation that was sponsored by Council Delegate Curran Hannon (St. Michaels/Oak Springs) was tabled during the spring session by Roy Laughter and Kenneth Maryboy.



At right, the Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan sponsored a human rights bill that was passed unanimously by the 21st Navajo Nation Council during a special session June 30. (Photo by Shoriel Charley)