



## The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# Navajo Council completes day two of 2008 Fall Session

## *Council endorses Barack Obama for U.S. President*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — The 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council kicked off its 2008 Fall Session on Oct. 20, receiving two oral reports. One report was Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan's Report to the Navajo Nation Council, which the Council accepted by a vote of 51-0, and the second was the State of the Navajo Nation address from the Honorable Joe Shirley Jr., president of the Navajo Nation that was accepted by a vote of 56-2.

Written reports were also received from the various standing committees, the boards and commissions, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Regional Director and the from the area director of the Indian Health Services.

The Council voted to amend the proposed Council agenda and deleted several pieces of legislation that dealt with appropriations, a move as a result of a zero balance in the Undesignated-Unreserved Fund balance.

The Council also spent nearly an hour in executive session to hear a report from acting Chief Legislative Counsel Frank Seanez, regarding the Office of the Speaker's dealings with developer Will Graven and to hear a follow-up report on the status of the OnSat fiasco and investigation of the Office of the President on Oct. 20.

On Oct. 21, day two of the Navajo Nation Council session, Legislation No. 0197-08 was entertained by the Council and was sponsored by Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) and Young Jeff Tom (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake). This legislation failed to pass by a vote of 20-62 and was action to approve the policy and procedures governing the nomination process, review and award of the Diné Nation Medal of Honor. The item was tabled on July 25 during the 2008 Summer Session by a vote of 50-19 for further review and discussion at the Veteran's Conference, which was held Sept. 24-26.

Several council delegates thanked Speaker Morgan for his initiative to honor the Navajo veterans, but many felt that more effort should be put into researching the improvement of veterans' services — services that Speaker Morgan has always advocated for.

Speaker Morgan, with his agent, Staff Assistant Leila Help-Tulley, mentioned that a survey was conducted in cooperation with the Navajo Department of Veterans at the request of the Council during its 2008 Summer Session.

In the survey, four areas of questions were asked. The results of the survey provided a pie chart that gauged the results. The survey found that the majority of the veterans surveyed were from the Ft. Defiance Agency. The survey found that 59 percent of the veterans were aware of the Diné Nation Medal of Honor, nearly 53 percent said it was an appropriate name and 87 percent supported the idea of the creation of the Division of Veterans — a separate action involving veterans' affairs.



Navajo Council Delegate Rex Lee Jim reviews legislation on day two of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council's Fall Session on Oct. 21, 2008. (Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler)

Help-Tulley mentioned that the Speaker's Office has also received several resolutions disputing the medal, but that was not representative of all veterans — some supported the idea of the Diné Medal of Honor.

In other Council action, Legislation No. 0646-08 was related to an emergency and was sponsored by Leonard Tsosie (Pueblo Pintado/ Torreon/Whitehorse Lake) and Tommy Tsosie (LeChee) to endorse and support Sen. Barack Obama for President of the United States of America. The Council passed the legislation by a vote of 59-21, after a nearly two-hour debate over the issue.

Before passing the endorsement, Councilwoman Hope MacDonald-Lone Tree (Coalmine Canyon/Toh Nanees Dizi) made an amendment and was adamant about ensuring a clause to the proposed resolution, which cited issues the Navajo Nation wants resolved with the support of Sen. Obama, once he is elected as President of the United States.

MacDonald-Lone Tree stated in an amendment, "The resolution is seeking the support on specific issues, including, the support of the Winters Doctrine for allocation of water rights to the Navajo Nation, support for full funding of the Emergency Fund for Indian Country to address issues relating to law enforcement, support of full funding for the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and increased funding for Indian Health Service, and support funding to allow the development of areas affected by the Bennett Freeze. The amendment also asked for support of adequate funding for economic development, housing, infrastructure and jobs."



Miss Navajo Yolanda Charley and Miss Pine Country Rodeo, Brianna N. McCabe, pose for a picture after being presented with gifts from the Navajo Nation Council on Oct. 20, 2008. (Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler)

Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto) mentioned, "Obama's opponent, we know who that is, will appoint conservative judges, which will further deteriorate the sovereignty of the great Navajo Nation."

"Electing Senator Obama will welcome tribal representation to the presidential table; it has been a very long time since tribes had complete decision-making for their own destiny," Nez added. "As the largest tribe in the United States, let's take the lead and support Senator Barack Obama for the Presidency of the United States on Nov. 4. Let's tell our family and friends to vote on this very important election."

Support for Sen. Obama was not unanimous, Pete Ken Atcitty (Shiprock) believed Navajo voters should choose for themselves, whether it be a Democrat or a Republican.

"I am a minority within a minority, I don't support this legislation," Atcitty said. "This legislation implies that Navajos are predictable. In a sense, it says the Navajo people cannot decide who to vote for. Anyone of us can endorse who we would like. This legislation does not belong here and the individual states do not do things like this. I strongly believe the Navajo voters can cast their votes on their own."

In other action, the Council spent half the day once again in executive session to discuss issues related to \$500,000 that was earmarked by the Council for an investigation into the OnSat affair and the Office of the President. The Council spent nearly two hours in executive session hearing a report from the Attorney General Louis Denetsosie and Frank Seanez, chief legislative counsel.

The Council recessed for the day and will continue on Wednesday, Oct. 22, for day three of the Fall Session.