



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

September 15, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaker Morgan clamps down on discretionary fund assistance program, request internal audit

Many fail to realize the positive impacts it has on many Navajo people

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan is taking steps to clamp down on requirements of discretionary funds given to the Navajo people. A recent newspaper article reported alleged abuse of the discretionary funds program, but many fail to realize the positive impacts it has on many Navajo people that often use the program as their last resort in obtaining the assistance they desperately need, many times the positive side of the program is rarely reported by the media.

Today in response, Speaker Morgan requested the Office of the Auditor General to conduct an annual internal audit of discretionary fund assistance payments within the Legislative Branch of the Navajo Nation. According to the current Legislative Branch Policies and Procedures, an annual internal audit is required for such financial assistance.

To the extent necessary, proactive steps will be taken as may be necessary to protect the fiscal and ethical integrity of the Navajo Nation Legislative Branch and the long-standing Navajo Nation practice of discretionary financial assistance to Navajo constituents by the Speaker and Navajo Nation Council delegates.

"In connection with the annual internal audit, I would expect a review of source documents would be conducted. To the extent that any findings would be made relative to the internal audit, a corrective action plan would be agreed upon and any corrective actions set forth would be taken," Speaker Morgan said. "This is in accord with the normal processes for internal audits conducted by the Navajo Nation. In addition, I have instituted a review of the current Legislative Branch Policies and Procedures for financial assistance to determine whether these policies and procedures should be amended to address new internal control issues and to that extent, these policies and procedures are appropriate for extension to discretionary fund assistance payments made by other Navajo Nation entities."

"I believe that these steps will be sufficient to determine the existence of any deficiencies in the implementation of the existing Legislative Branch policies and to consider any amendments to the existing policies, which may be necessary to prevent any abuse in the future," Morgan added.

It must be recognized the provisions of discretionary fund assistance payments have historically played an important role in assisting Navajos at the local level with their emergency financial needs. Navajo Nation Council delegates and the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council, as well as the President of the Navajo Nation have long been appropriated discretionary funds in order to allow them the ability to provide financial assistance to members of the Navajo Nation public in their times of dire need. Records show the historical practice extends back through previous administrations.

Discretionary funds, when available, have been issued to assist Navajos with burial expenses, emergency medical bills, rental and utility costs, emergency automobile repairs and other transportation needs. Navajo students receive financial assistance with educational costs, including funds to pay for tuition, clothing, books, lodging, transportation and educational enrichment expenses. Navajo senior citizens, youth and veterans' organizations have also been provided financial assistance with these funds -- all with required documents prior to receiving assistance from the Office of the Speaker.

###