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Law and Order Committee approves 3-year grant awarded to Navajo peacemaking program for asset building in rural communities

WINDOW ROCK – Legislation to approve and accept a three-year grant that will assist the Navajo Nation Peacemaking Program in expanding the breadth of its services for rural Navajo communities was passed by the Law and Order Committee on Monday.

The committee voted 2-0 in favor of approving Legislation No. 0478-12, which was sponsored by Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Cornfields, Ganado, Jeddito, Kin Dah Łichíí, Steamboat). The legislation will move forward for consideration by the Budget and Finance Committee, which has final authority.

“Approval of this grant enables the Navajo Peacemaking Program to continue building upon its valuable efforts in rural communities to promote strong and healthy cultural identities in Navajo children,” said Delegate Shepherd, as it relates to court proceedings in areas such as child welfare and adoption.

The grant will specifically allow the Peacemaking Program to hire a community development specialist who will “prepare resource lists and public awareness documents to complement the core traditional teachings and travel to communities querying their needs,” according to the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch.

In addition, part of the grant funds will be used to increase the involvement of community elders who will serve as traditional teachers and receive training to become peacemakers in accordance with the Peacemaking Program’s traditional curriculum.

Gloria Benally, program coordinator, said the grant accommodates the section of the program’s plan of operations called the “Life Values Engagements,” which supports the provision of cultural and traditional education at the community level for children, adults, and elders.

Benally also informed the committee that the project will be implemented throughout the Navajo Nation’s eleven judicial districts, after Council Delegate Duane Tsinigine (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai Bii'Tó, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) inquired for more information as to which communities would be benefitting from the program’s activities.

Soon after the program receives all the necessary approvals from the assigned standing committees, Benally said it will move forward with advertising for and hiring a community development specialist.

The grant period extends from Oct. 1, 2012 through Sept. 20, 2015, and was awarded by the Administration for Children and Families under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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