



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 21, 2012

**MEDIA CONTACTS**  
Jerome Clark | 928.637.5603  
Carmenlita Chief | 928.255.3428  
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

## **Health, Education, and Human Services Committee passes legislation proposing amendments to Navajo Veterans Trust Fund for improved veterans' assistance**

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee on Tuesday voted 4-0 to approve a legislation aimed at amending the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund found at 12 N.N.C. §1176 to allow for “better assistance for veterans at the local level,” according to sponsor Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Cornfields, Ganado, Jeddito, Kin Dah Łichíí, Steamboat).

The purpose of Legislation No. 0470-12 is to amend the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund to provide for an equal distribution of the fund market value between the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs and the 110 Navajo Chapters for public assistance to veterans.

Currently, 4 percent of the average market value of the Veterans’ Trust Fund covering the past three fiscal years can be used as supplemental funding for programs and services to benefit veterans on an annual basis.

While the current code specifies that 95 percent of the trust funds are to be used for veterans programs and services and 5 percent for administrative purposes, it does not identify distribution to any specific veterans’ assistance entities.

“This legislation amends the code to identify where the four percent will go,” said Delegate Shepherd, who assured HEHSC members that the legislation will not change the set-aside amount that currently goes into the Veterans Trust Fund.

According to Shepherd’s proposed code amendment, the 95 percent portion of the Fund mentioned previously will be split in half. Fifty percent will be distributed to the 110 Navajo chapters and 50 percent will be allocated to the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs.

The 5 percent Fund allocation covering administrative costs will remain the same.

The code changes are intended to speed up the process of getting much needed financial assistance to Navajo veterans who have expressed frustrations with hindrances due to the current distribution set-up, said Delegate Shepherd.

Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizí) was initially concerned that the legislation exhibit did not have attached support resolutions from Navajo veterans’ agency organizations.

“This is something important, and I would be more comfortable in approving if there was proof of support,” said Delegate Butler. “I would like for them to be involved in this since this will be affecting their programs.”

Due to this concern, the committee voted 4-0 in favor of including a directive for Delegate Shepherd to include support resolutions with the legislation exhibit.

Legislation No. 0470-12 now moves onto the Budget and Finance Committee for consideration. Thereafter, it will move forward to the Law and Order Committee, the Naa'bi'iyati' Committee, and finally the Navajo Nation Council.

###