



Navajo Nation Council – Office of the Speaker

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NEWS RELEASE:

President line-item vetoes legislation addressing Navajo land degradation, signs five into law

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Of the seven legislative pieces pushed forward from the 22nd Navajo Nation Council's May 25 special session to President Ben Shelly for his approval, five were signed into law. However, legislation that would have enabled the Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture to begin working to resolve the nationwide feral livestock problem, deemed an emergency situation by the council, was entirely line-item vetoed by the president on June 6.

In legislation CMY-37-12, the Council requested for \$2.7 million to be drawn from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance (UUFB) to alleviate the environmental stress caused by abundant numbers of feral livestock and compounded by continuing drought conditions across the Navajo Nation.

“With the tight budget uncertainty that we face with federal budget cut backs, it is imperative that we utilize all funding with a definite plan,” wrote President Shelly in his line-item veto justification letter to Speaker Johnny Naize.

In December of last year, Navajo Department of Agriculture department manager, Leo Watchman, Jr., outlined a plan comprised of three phases in which his department would coordinate with Navajo Resource Enforcement and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to conduct a nationwide six-month roundup of feral livestock to as a way to significantly reduce the devastating effects the feral animals wreak on land resources.

The plan delineation was included in the funding legislation package the council sent to the president for approval.

Also in the letter, President Shelly urged the Department of Agriculture to work in coordination with Navajo Nation Chapters, District Grazing Officials, Land Boards and other appropriate departments and programs to formulate a plan to address the widespread feral horse problem.

The president reasoned the feral horse epidemic could be addressed at the local chapter level if Navajo Nation Chapters coordinate with Navajo resource enforcement officers and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to conduct local feral horse roundups on a consistent basis.

Part of the requested \$2.7 million in CMY-37-12 was also to be used to conduct stallion castrations, provide mare contraception, provide cash incentives to reduce livestock, and disseminate information about the initiative through media outlets.

Acquiring President Shelly's veto was legislation CMY-37-12, which sought to amend the Navajo Nation Election Code at 11 N.N.C. §§6 and 8 by authorizing four terms for school board positions and authorizing school board members to serve on one school board.

The council was successful in garnering the president's signature of approval to obtain supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance to achieve the following:

- \$16.1 million for the head start program, solid waste management program, air transportation department, Navajo transit system, facilities maintenance administration building one, Navajo chapters, judicial districts in Chinle and Window Rock, Office of the Speaker, Navajo chapter district grazing officials, Eastern Navajo Land Board, Navajo Nation Farm Board, and Navajo Veterans,
- \$1.5 million to the Navajo Division of Transportation for Fiscal Year 2012,
- \$2.8 million to provide direct service to local chapters and communities for the construction of waterlines, storage tanks, rehabilitating earthen dams, drilling, and engineering and equipment repairs.
- \$1 million to be used for redistricting litigation in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

The president also approved legislation CMY-32-12, which authorizes the amendment of the Nation's Fiscal Year 2012 comprehensive budget to appropriate projected revenues of \$651,849 dollars.

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