



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Budget and Finance Committee receives update regarding potential impacts of sequester cutbacks for the Navajo Nation**

WINDOW ROCK – The Budget and Finance Committee received an update from the Navajo Nation Washington Office Director Clara Pratte on Tuesday, via video conference, regarding the potential impacts of sequester budget cuts for the Navajo Nation.

On Mar. 26, U.S. President Barack Obama signed into law H.R. 933, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, a continuing resolution that funds the federal government through the end of the current fiscal year and maintains the \$85 billion spending reductions mandated by the Budget Control Act of 2011.

According to information from Tommy Thompson with the Tribal/Interior Budget Council, the Bureau of Indian Affairs calculates its budget reduction to be approximately 5.2 percent explained Pratte.

Pratte said the BIA had planned to absorb most of the budget cuts at the administrative and executive levels.

However, the BIA recently informed Pratte that each line item in the BIA's budget must be reduced to comply with the Budget Control Act.

BFC chair Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) inquired on how the spending cuts would impact specific Navajo Nation programs, urging Pratte to relay information to the BFC, three-branch chiefs, and programs as it becomes available in order to avoid a "crisis management" situation.

The Navajo Nation Washington D.C. Office has reached out to agencies like the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services and U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, and expects to receive information on each agency's estimated budget cuts in a week or so. At which time, a clearer assessment can be provided for specific programs, Pratte said.

BFC vice chair Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin) expressed concern over the possibility of mandated furloughs at the federal level.

This could impact Navajo Tribal Parks at a time when the tourist season is beginning, Delegate Nez said.

Delegate Nez also pointed out that the Department of Interior now has travel restrictions, which not only limits interaction between the Nation's leaders and the DOI, but may also increase travel expenses for Tribes to send leaders to Washington D.C. more frequently, Delegate Nez added.

"It's going to affect the tribal consultation dialogue that President Obama has always advocated for," Delegate Nez said.

On a positive note, Pratte said the U.S. House and Senate have passed their versions of the 2014 budget resolutions, which includes a statement in the Senate's version that addresses the importance of upholding the treaty and trust responsibilities of the United States.

Pratte also noted that the Senate's version of the 2014 proposed budget allows for BIA funding at a rate consistent with their pre-sequester budget. It also provides an additional \$53 million for Indian Health Service to construct new facilities.

Pratte said the Navajo Nation Washington Office has argued that the sequestration violates a presidential executive order which provides that decisions regarding funding that impacts tribal nations must go through a full consultation process.

"Our point is that the sequestration was a forced decision made without full consultation, which is a violation of the executive order," added Pratte.

Pratte emphasized the importance of having Navajo Nation leadership present in Washington D.C. to testify at the House Committee on Appropriations budget hearings, scheduled to take place on April 24 and 25.

BFC members Council Delegates Nelson BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch' izhi) and Mel Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a') urged the BFC, Navajo Nation Washington Office, and the Nation's three-branch chiefs to meet and develop a plan for addressing budget cutbacks.

At the discussion's conclusion, the Budget and Finance Committee and Pratte agreed to develop a resolution that would state the Navajo Nation's position regarding the sequester budget cuts.

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