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**Resources and Development Committee votes to approve
the funding of Chapter Infrastructure Improvement Priority Projects**

WINDOW ROCK – The Resources and Development Committee considered Legislation No. 0118-13, which seeks to approve the Navajo Nation Chapters’ Infrastructure Improvement Priority Projects for fiscal years 2013 through 2018.

Legislation No. 0118-13 was previously tabled by the RDC on Mar. 30, to allow for the collection of supporting chapter resolutions by the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels), said the legislation’s primary purpose is to use the interest from the Permanent Trust Fund to build proposed infrastructure projects.

“The chapters have taken the time to thoroughly re-assess their community needs and produce a chapter resolution,” said Delegate Hale. “The legislation will create capital for our chapters.”

RDC chair Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) noted that 97 of the Nation’s 110 chapters submitted supporting resolutions, confirming their project proposals.

“The projects that were included in the original document are 2-years-old,” said Delegate Benally. “The RDC asked for resolutions to ensure current chapter needs are being addressed.”

Although a majority of Chapters submitted supporting resolutions for their projects, Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) was skeptical of the proposed funding amounts.

“Some proposals concern me, \$50 million for one project is not feasible,” said Delegate Tsosie. “We need to look at the true needs of the Nation, like the elder and youth sectors.”

Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete (Chinle) questioned if the proposals should require a funding limit to ensure funds are maximized to their full potential.

“These proposals need a funding ceiling and solid prioritization process to maximize the funds,” said Delegate Pete. “I don’t see much sense in adding the chapter resolutions to the legislation’s documents.”

Delegate Tsosie argued that the proposal listing neglected the true needs of the people, and questioned the relevance of the chapter resolutions.

“The people tell me they want the roads graded, not proposals for a chapter house parking lot,” said Delegate Tsosie. “When you only have 25 votes on a chapter resolution, and have a population of over 1000, that’s not democracy.”

Speaking in support of the legislation, Council Delegate Roscoe Smith (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) said he was excited to witness the Nation’s investments return in the form of capital development.

“Here is an opportunity for each chapter to build something tangible by utilizing the Permanent Trust Fund interest,” said Delegate Smith.

Council Delegate George Apachito (Alamo, Ramah, Tohajiilee) stressed that recommendations from each of the 24 Council Delegates to prioritize the proposals must be considered.

“We need to keep working on the prioritization process in order to be fair,” said Delegate Apachito. “I am optimistic of the legislation’s potential, my chapters will be happy to see additions to their communities.”

After a lengthy discussion, RDC members voted 2-2, requiring RDC chair Delegate Benally to cast a tie-breaking vote.

“I will support the addition of the chapter resolutions and the final legislation when it goes to the Council,” said Delegate Benally.

The RDC approved Legislation No. 0118-13 with a vote of 3-2.

The legislation now moves on to the Budget and Finance Committee and Naabik’íyáti’ Committee before it goes to the Navajo Nation Council for final consideration.

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