



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Navajo Nation Council authorizes the NNTRC to  
implement and manage the Nation's 9-1-1 emergency response system**

**WINDOW ROCK** – The 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council voted today to approve Legislation No. 0212-13, an enabling legislation that amends Title 2 and Title 21 of the Navajo Nation Code, and authorizes the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission to implement and manage a 9-1-1 emergency response system within the Navajo Nation.

“We need this legislation to lay the foundation to build a sustainable 9-1-1 system. We are losing lives without it,” said legislation sponsor Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii). “Emergency response is a major challenge for our isolated Navajo communities.”

The legislation was previously approved by the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, Law and Order Committee, and the Naabik'iyati' Committee.

During the discussion, Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) raised concern over whether the Nation would need to waive its sovereignty to obtain funding from the federal and state governments.

NNTRC acting executive director Brian Tagaban, said the legislation would not require the Nation to waive its sovereignty, but would require the Nation to comply with the guidelines of each funding source. He also added that the bill would allow the Nation to exercise its sovereignty by authorizing the NNTRC to design and plan the 9-1-1 system guidelines and regulations.

“Developing this system is a lengthy process, and unfortunately I don't see any other agency or department taking on this authority,” said Tagaban. “We will now be in the position where the Navajo Nation can make a 9-1-1 system a reality by designating jurisdiction, developing a service plan, and obtaining eligibility for funding.”

Council Delegate Mel Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a') questioned if the NNTRC was capable of taking on the additional responsibility, as they are already tasked with regulating all of the Nation's telecommunication services.

In response, Tagaban explained that the NNTRC requested for additional personnel and listed this initiative as an administrative shortcoming in the NNTRC's 2014 Fiscal Year budget.

Additional personnel would allow for the NNTRC to complete rural addressing and additional requirements necessary for obtaining funding, according to Tagaban.

“This legislation is the first step to creating a safer Navajo Nation. The next step will be to address the need for more Navajo Nation police officers,” said Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau).

Prior to the Council’s vote, Delegate Phelps said he has encouraged President Ben Shelly to support future funding for the 9-1-1 system, and has received support from U.S. Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick of Arizona.

The Council approved Legislation No. 0212-13 with a vote of 19-0.

President Ben Shelly will have 10 calendar days to consider the legislation once the legislation is sent to the Office of the President and Vice-President.

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