



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Council approves Chapter's infrastructure improvement priority projects; override of 'junk food' sales tax fails to garner required votes**

*Council overrides veto to eliminate sales tax on fresh fruits and vegetables*

**WINDOW ROCK** – On the second day of the spring session, Council members voted 19-1 to approve Legislation No. 0118-13, the Navajo Nation Chapters' Infrastructure Improvement Priority Projects listing, for Fiscal Years 2013 through 2018.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) explained that following Council's decision to table the legislation and to refer it back to the Resources and Development Committee on Feb. 21, the Capital Improvement Office along with various programs reviewed additional project proposals which were then added to the listing.

The priority listing was developed over the course of several years by the Nation's Capital Improvement Office and includes developments of government buildings, chapter houses, senior citizen centers, waste and water systems, parking lots, and judicial facilities.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) acknowledged the need for infrastructure development throughout the Nation, and suggested the legislation should take a different approach to addressing the need.

"We should fund power lines all over the Navajo Nation. Let's get these power lines to the four corners of the Navajo Nation because the chapters cannot afford [the] power lines and we have the means to do it," said Delegate Tsosie, while also expressing the need for telecommunications development for the entire Nation.

The legislation was met with strong support from several delegates including Council Delegate Duane Tsinigine (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai'Bii'To, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) who said his chapter officials have devoted extensive time and expenses to developing their proposals.

"I plead with you Council members that we pass this important document," Delegate Tsinigine said. "There [are] chapter houses that need to be rebuilt and we are tired of meeting in warehouses."

Following over two hours of debate, Council members voted 19-1 to approved Legislation No. 0118-13. President Ben Shelly will have ten calendar days to consider the resolution once it is sent to the Office of the President and Vice President.

On Tuesday, Council members also addressed Legislation No. 0083-14, which sought to override President Shelly's veto of Council Resolution CJA-04-14, the Healthy Diné Nation Act.

Council previously approved the original legislation which sought to impose a two-percent sales tax on “junk food” sold within the Navajo Nation in an effort to increase diabetes awareness and to promote healthy living.

The resolution was later vetoed by President Shelly who stated that it was an “unfunded mandate” and that the Nation was not prepared to implement such a tax.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) was joined by professional golfer Notah Begay, III, who asked for Council’s support to override the veto as a way of advocating for Navajo youth and doing what’s in their “best interest.”

“This message goes much further than a simple tax, it’ll resonate and ripple through Indian country saying that we finally have a government that is willing to take a stand on this issue,” stated Begay.

The override attempt failed to garner enough votes to override the veto with a vote of 13-7.

According to Navajo Nation law, an override of a presidential veto requires two-thirds of Council’s approval, or 16 supporting votes.

In a separate legislation also sponsored by Delegate Hale, Council voted 19-1 to override President Shelly’s veto of Council Resolution CJA-05-14, which eliminates the current five-percent sales tax on fresh fruits and fresh vegetables sold within the Navajo Nation.

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