



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Naabik'iyáti' Committee establishes the 'Department of Health Creation Task Force'**

**WINDOW ROCK**—During a special meeting held on Wednesday, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee voted 8-5 to approve Legislation No. 0029-14, establishing the “Naabik'iyáti' Committee Department of Health Creation Task Force” to consult and work with various individuals and entities to revise a separate legislation which proposes the establishment of a Navajo Nation Department of Health.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) introduced Legislation No. 0029-14 following a meeting on Jan. 3 between Naabik'iyáti' Committee members, Navajo Division of Health, Vice President Rex Lee Jim, and representatives from various health providers.

The Jan. 3 meeting was held to address Legislation No. 0346-13, the proposed Navajo Department of Health Act of 2013, which aims to rename the Nation's current Division of Health and to consolidate certain responsibilities and authorities under the proposed department.

The Naabik'iyáti' Committee considered and tabled Legislation No. 0346-13 on Dec. 5.

Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) who sponsored the bill to establish the Department of Health said the proposed establishment is needed, “because no entity currently has the responsibility to monitor, evaluate, regulate and protect Diné citizens regarding quality and culturally appropriate health care.”

Following the approval of several amendments on Wednesday, including one proposed by Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin) to include five representatives from various “638 programs” the committee approved the establishment of a task force consisting of a total of 16 members.

Council Delegate Charles Damon II (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) and Navajo Nation Vice President Rex Lee Jim will serve as co-chairs of the task force.

The other 14 members include Council Delegates Dwight Witherspoon, LoRenzo Bates, and Leonard Tsosie, five “638 program” representatives, Home Care Health Providers representative Elvina Emerson, and one representative from each of the following: Division of Health, non-emergency health care transport provider, Diné Traditional Healers, non-Indian health care provider, one health care provider to represent the communities of Alamo, Ramah, and Tohajilee.

“638 programs” are defined under Public Law 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, which authorizes the U.S. Secretaries of the Interior, Health, Education, and other government agencies to enter into contracts with federally recognized tribes to allow tribes to administer funds, giving them greater control over their welfare.

The legislation states that the co-chairs are tasked with keeping the Naabik’iyátí’ Committee and the Council informed of the status and progress of the revisions, to produce a revised legislation for the Naabik’iyátí’ Committee no later than April 10 and for the Council no later than the start of the Spring Council Session which begins on April 21.

The Naabik’iyátí’ Committee serves as the final authority for Legislation No. 0029-14.

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