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**Health, Education, and Human Services
Committee receives report from the Navajo Utah Commission**

MONTEZUMA CREEK, Utah – On Wednesday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report from the Navajo Utah Commission, regarding a plan of operation and various issues and concerns including funding shortfalls, educational deficiencies and safety issues.

Clarence Rockwell, executive director of the Navajo Utah Commission, stated that currently, the Commission has a small operation budget which allows for three staff members to meet ten times a year. Under such conditions, Rockwell noted that it has been difficult for the Navajo Utah Commission to communicate effectively with state legislators.

“We want our voices to be heard in the tribal government that was the basis of forming this Commission. Sometimes, our issues aren’t really heard or recognized nor discussed. We are supposed to interact and work on our people’s behalf and improve services and resources,” stated Rockwell.

According to the report, the State of Utah recognizes the right of Native American tribes to self-government; therefore, the State of Utah continues to work with Native American tribes on a government-to-government basis. This includes issues addressing tribal self-government, trust resources, tribal treaties, and other rights.

“The issue of education is always a major issue because of the poor performing schools we have here on the reservation. We talked to the State’s Department of Education this fall, and they initiated a grading system all across the State of Utah, and unfortunately for us, the schools they were given failing grades. We talked with the school districts to improve the performance of our schools but it seemed like we are not making progress or advancing,” said Rockwell.

Recently, the Utah State Office of Education began a new grading system for schools that is designed to provide school accountability. Navajo Utah Commission proposes the Utah State Office of Education and San Juan District to work diligently with schools, parents, and community leaders in reaching academic success.

“All the schools within San Juan District that reside and operate near Navajo Nation are D’s and F’s. That’s bad. I think that we need to get more analyses on this or possibly work with the Department of Dine’ Education,” said Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizi).

HEHSC members also discussed a recent incident that occurred at the Montezuma Creek Elementary School involving carbon monoxide poisoning due to the malfunction of a water heater, resulting in dozens of students needing medical help. As a result, the Navajo Utah Commission is urging the State to support the installation of monoxide detectors and emergency evacuation plans for schools state-wide.

“Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that you cannot see or smell. What if something like this happens again? Why can’t we have these carbon dioxide detectors? I think that this committee needs to somehow enforce a letter to get carbon monoxide detectors. There is only one [detector] in the chapter house,” said Council Delegate Kenneth Maryboy (Mexican Water, Ante, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa).

At the conclusion of the meeting, the HEHSC members expressed their continued support in advocating for the issues affecting Navajo constituents living in the State of Utah.

HEHSC members voted 3-1 to accept the report.

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