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Resources and Development Committee approves the establishment of Administrative Service Centers as part of the Nation's decentralization initiative

WINDOW ROCK – Last Thursday, the Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0139-14, amending the plan of operation for the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development to establish 16 new Administrative Service Centers across the Navajo Nation. The centers will replace the five Local Governance Support Centers as part of the ongoing decentralization initiative.

The purpose of the Administrative Service Centers is to provide planning services, technical assistance, and guidance to chapters relating to project planning, infrastructure development, community land use planning and provide guidance to the Five Management System and policies.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin) expressed his support of the continuing efforts dedicated to the decentralization initiative.

“The overall initiative is to bring more jobs to the local chapters and bringing knowledgeable professionals to help build our Nation and to decentralize some of the authority here in Window Rock to these 16 centers so that service deliveries to our constituents will be efficient,” stated Delegate Nez.

In 2013, the Budget and Finance Committee directed the DCD to carry out the decentralization initiative. In August 2013, the Navajo Nation Council approved \$3 million for the decentralization effort.

The DCD conducted a series of public hearings regarding the initiative at various chapter houses and received overwhelming support for the initiative, according to Delegate Nez.

DCD executive director Leonard Chee stated in January that the initiative will place emphasis on developing staff positions to operate the new centers.

“The LGSC's will be phased out, so this is a decentralization transition. The new positions will be created and current positions will transfer. However, some positions require [college] degrees and a certain amount of experience,” stated Chee.

The new centers will include a director to develop and implement policies and procedures for effective management. Each center will be staffed by a senior planner, administrative assistant, accountant, and plans are underway to hire attorneys for the centers as well.

According to the legislation, the existing LGSC's will continue to operate during the transition period.

"My wish is to transfer LGSC staff into 16 administrative centers and to continue their tenure and benefits. We are also hoping to recruit some highly-educated people and we hope to build upon bringing in some young and educated people. Overall, it is to provide better services and to have an efficient government," stated Delegate Nez.

RDC chair Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) expressed support for the legislation and urged her committee colleagues to do so also.

"It is time to implement this legislation and make the necessary changes. I believe that this is part of the vote—the vote of the people when they reduced the Council to regionalize," stated Delegate Benally.

RDC members voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0139-14.

The Resources and Development Committee serves as the final authority for the legislation.

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