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Naabik'iyátí' Committee opposes liquor license renewal for Sanders liquor establishment; tables bill opposing disparaging references to Native People

WINDOW ROCK—On Thursday, Naabik'iyátí' Committee members approved Legislation No. 0059-14, urging the Apache County Board of Supervisors, the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control, the Arizona State Liquor Board and any other appropriate agencies to reject the renewal of a liquor license for “Ole Red Barn Liquor,” owned by Gary McDonald.

Legislation co-sponsor Council Delegate Lorenzo Curley (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins), pointed out that the owner of the establishment, Gary McDonald, is currently facing federal charges for manufacturing and distributing methamphetamine drugs in addition to weapons charges.

Such activity has led to increased drug use and other criminal activity involving surrounding community members including Diné people, according to Delegate Curley.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) called on state leaders to also address the ongoing issues concerning the “Red Barn” liquor establishment.

“Where are Rep. [Albert] Hale and Sen. [Carlyle] Begay? They should be leading the charge on these issues,” stated Delegate Tsosie.

During the discussion, committee members approved two amendments including one to change language to urge the disapproval of the “transfer” of the liquor license, in addition to its renewal and to add three additional liquor establishments to the legislation.

The committee approved a second amendment proposed by Delegate Tsosie, to use the term demand instead of the word “urge” in an effort to strengthen the language of the bill.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Naabik'iyátí' Committee members voted 12-0 to approve Legislation No. 0059-14.

The Naabik'iyátí' Committee serves as the final authority for the legislation.

In a separate bill, the Naabik'iyátí' Committee voted 5-4 to table Legislation No. 0078-14, opposing the use of disparaging references to Native People by professional sports franchises.

Sponsor of the bill, Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizi), called upon his fellow Naabik'iyátí' Committee members to support the legislation while emphasizing that the Navajo Nation is the leader among Native American tribes and should “blaze the trail” for other tribes to

oppose disparaging references such as the term, “Redskins” used by the Washington Redskins—a professional football team of the National Football Association.

“This unfortunate practice of using such insulting names as Redskins without regard to Native people and our unique identity has to stop. It is blatant discrimination, racism, and ignorance. It exploits our sovereign identity as Diné,” Delegate Butler stated.

Delegate Butler also cited the psychological ramifications of disparaging remarks on Navajo youth and provided a brief history of the term “redskins,” explaining that bounties were once offered for the murder of “redskins.”

“What do our youth think of themselves when they see team names and mascots that ridicule and deride our culture?” asked Delegate Butler. “This becomes a roadblock preventing them from achieving success, and being secure in their identity as a Native person, as Diné—contributing to unemployment, domestic and family violence, substance abuse, and other social ills prevalent on our lands.”

At the request of Council Delegate Charles Damon II (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), former Navajo Nation Chairman and Navajo Code Talkers Association President Peter MacDonald was provided the opportunity to respond to the legislation.

MacDonald said the term “Redskins” should be viewed in a positive light that honors Native Americans instead of in a manner that demeans Diné people.

In addition, Delegate Butler noted that U.S. Congressman Eni Fa’aua’a Hunkin Faleomavaega Jr. of American Samoa has introduced legislation that would prohibit the registration of new trademarks using the term “redskin” or “redskins,” and would provide a mechanism to petition for the cancellation of existing trademarks using disparaging epithets.

Near the end of the two-hour long discussion, Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) requested the input of administrators from schools within the Navajo Nation that utilize similar mascots and names for their sports teams.

Naabik’iyátí’ Committee members voted 5-4 to table the legislation to provide time to gather input from school administrators.

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