



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee advocates for pay raises for Navajo Nation police officers

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee received an update report from Navajo Nation Office of Management and Budget’s Contracts and Grants section and the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, pertaining to 638 Contract funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs for public safety in regards to salary increases for Navajo Nation law enforcement officers.

On Aug. 18, during LOC’s fiscal year 2017 budget hearings, LOC members issued a directive to increase the salary for law enforcement officers of the Nation to the proposed medium pay scale.

“The Nation’s law enforcement officers are earning very low pay. Compared to other tribes and other state and county officers, the Nation’s officers are making pennies. I support the initiative to increase salary pay because they worked vigorously to keep individuals, families, and communities safe. They are underpaid and overworked. The Nation needs to invest in our law enforcement officers,” stated LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood).

According to NNDPS executive director Jesse Delmar, carryover funds from the 638 Contract would be utilized for the pay increases, added Delmar.

“The purpose of the meeting is to get clarification from all participating parties if pay raises for the officer is possible. Can the 638 Contract cover the total cost for the raises? If so, when can officers expect a pay raise and how can NNDPS and LOC prepare for the pay raise change? asked LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau).

OMB contracting officer Cordell Shortey said the 638 Contract funding can be utilized for the pay raises and used only if the money is used for the same purpose that it was intended for.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) stated that the medium pay raises for the law enforcement officers would be an recurring expense in the NNDPS annual budget and questioned if NNDPS had a plan in place to sustain the funding level.

“The raises will be a recurring expense and we need to take this into account because what if the 638 funding can’t cover the cost in a few years. Does NNDPS have a plan to address this issue if it

arises? To cover the cost, will the Nation's general fund be used or will the Nation advocate for more funding from the federal government?" asked Speaker Bates.

Delegate Begay, who sits on the Tribal Interior Budget Council at the national level, said the 638 Contract funding is not definite and it can be revisited based on the Nation's needs, such as addressing the pay raises for law enforcements officers and other public safety personnel.

Delmar explained that the pay raises for law enforcement officers would cost approximately \$5 million a year.

"This initiative is possible and LOC will continue to support to give the Nation's police officers a fair pay for the long hours and huge responsibilities they carry everyday while on duty," stated LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi).

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