



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council members applaud approval of \$2 million for summer youth employment and enrichment programs

WINDOW ROCK – Members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council applauded Monday's approval by President Russell Begaye of Council resolution CMY-31-16, which will provide \$2 million from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for summer youth employment and youth enrichment programs for Navajo high school students and college students.

On May 27, the Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved the legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), who said the funding would benefit Navajo youth in each of the Navajo Nation's 110 chapters by providing employment opportunities.

"I thank President Begaye for his support of our Navajo youth," said Delegate Damon. "This funding will help our youth during the summer and when they return to school in the fall by allowing them to use the money they earn for tuition, cost of school supplies, and other expenses."

When Council considered the bill in May, they also approved a total of seven amendments including one that directs the Office of the Controller, Office of Management and Budget, and the Division of Community Development to expedite the allocation of the funds to chapters within five days once signed by the President.

Several Council members including Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), expressed concern that the funding might not reach the chapters in time for summer, considering that many schools had already ended their school year.

On Monday, Delegate Damon also thanked his Council colleagues for their support and for approving amendments that he said would ensure that chapters receive the funds in a timely manner to begin hiring students as quickly as possible.

"I along with my colleagues respectfully ask the Controllers Office, OMB, and the Division of Community Development to work cooperatively and efficiently to get these funds to our communities as quickly as possible," added Delegate Damon.

Another amendment approved by the Council added language to allow the funds to be used for youth enrichment programs to provide positive opportunities for youth to learn life skills instead of performing menial tasks at chapter houses.

In addition, Council passed an amendment to establish or implement guidelines and policies by chapter resolution prior to the expenditure of the funds for enrichment programs and another that prohibits chapters from utilizing the funds for any other purpose other than summer student employment and student enrichment initiatives.

The funds will be distributed to the Nation's 110 chapters based on the 50/50 formula, meaning that half of the \$2 million will be divided equally among all chapters. The remaining funds will be divided proportionately among the chapters using a percentage equal to that figure which the number of registered voters in each chapter bears to the whole of registered Navajo Nation votes as determined by the most current voter registration figures available as of the date of the appropriation.

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