



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee advocates for additional funding for Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – On Wednesday, the Law and Order Committee and Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety addressed federal funding and contract concerns with officials from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Concerns included the tribal law enforcement salary increase, Navajo Department of Corrections contract regarding bed space, and facility operations and management funds.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) emphasized the importance of advocating for additional funding for Navajo police and the entire NNDPS.

“As a committee, we will continue to support NNDPS to address their needs. Our Navajo officers and public safety personnel continuously protect our families and communities 24/7. They extend their limited resources to ensure the safety of our Nation everyday. Therefore, we have to do whatever we can to support their efforts and initiatives,” stated Delegate Yazzie.

According to Navajo Department of Criminal Investigation Administrative Service Officer Shannon Gravatt, NNDPS receives federal funding through a 638 Contract with the BIA. In general, Navajo police officers are paid lower than BIA officers, who receive salaries twice or three times higher.

“Navajo officers patrol and serve a large land base. They carry the workload of long working hours and high rate of emergency calls. I believe that Navajo officers carry the same workload and responsibilities as the BIA officers. Navajo officers should be entitled to the same pay grade. How can we get higher salary for our officers?” questioned LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood).

BIA Office of Justice Services District IV Special Agent in Charge William McClure, said that NNDPS needs to provide justification to request a budget increase for police salary.

“The national budget committee will need a clear request of additional funding. For example, NNDPS can do an analysis of salaries and provide violent crime statistics to justify the request. Our office can also provide technical assistance with this request,” responded McClure.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) and Delegate Begay also addressed the idea of an agreement to rent vacant jail bed space to the BIA.

“The BIA wants to rent at least 80 jail beds and I believe this is a financial opportunity for NNDPS. Hopi jail does not have the capacity to hold inmates and they would like to work with the Nation instead of county governments,” stated Delegate Smith.

According to Navajo Nation Department of Corrections Director Delores Greyeyes, a negotiation between the Nation and the BIA needs to take place to agree on terms and conditions. A fair rental cost of jail beds and operation and maintenance costs will be included in the agreement.

Delegate Begay addressed the need for federal funds for operation and management costs for five new judicial complexes constructed throughout the Navajo Nation.

“LOC and NNDPS will work together to have all the concerns considered and addressed. We will support resolutions and policies to help our public safety division. We will begin immediately working on all the recommendations that the BIA has given us to request additional funding,” stated Delegate Yazzie.

LOC and NNDPS agreed to prepare all documents and justifications to present to the BIA. A follow-up meeting with NNDPS will be scheduled during the next LOC meeting on June 7.

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