



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee receives report from Utah Monument Valley High School regarding student safety

OLJATO, Utah – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee received a report from officials with Monument Valley High School located in Oljato, UT, approximately 22-miles north of Kayenta, Ariz. Monument Valley High School is a public school under the San Juan School District.

Monument Valley High School principal Spencer Singer reported that the safety of students is a primary concern and that the school has limited resources available to promote preventative and intervention measures.

LOC member Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. (Shonto, Naa'tsis'Áán, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin), who represents the community of Oljato, agreed that the safety of students is a high priority.

“Our children and elders need protection from harm and hostile environments. Our students need to feel safe at school and at home. I am aware that many school districts encounter the same concerns such as child abuse and drugs and alcohol usage and distribution at schools,” said Delegate Daniels.

Principal Singer said the school is trying to improve the standards of education, however, they have encountered setbacks due to drugs and alcohol usage and distribution at school, child abuse at home, adding that the lack of protective resources on school campus and within the community prohibits active progression of the school.

“We are doing what we can to address the problems at the school, but it gets frustrating at times. The lack of prevention and intervention services at the school and community has made it harder to resolve the issues. For example, I had to take in a student into my home because the student was being attacked at home. I tried making phone calls to Child Protection Services, group homes, and shelters, but I was being referred back-and-forth to Kayenta and the county. We need to shed light on this issue and identify a process to address student safety,” added Singer.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) raised a point that the Nation’s criminal justice system needs adjustments and improvements.

“Our children should never encounter abuse at school or at the home. How can we address this issue within our committee?” asked Delegate Smith.

Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety executive director Jesse Delmar stated that NNDPS, the Navajo Nation Chief Justice, and the Attorney General are currently addressing school safety and improving the gap between NNDPS and Navajo Nation Division of Social Services.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) recommended having a joint meeting with the Resources and Development Committee and the Health, Education, Human Services Committee to address the concern of student safety and lack of prevention and intervention services.

The Law and Order Committee approved the report with a 2-0 vote.

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