



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Navajo Nation Council approves \$242,000 for chapters to provide emergency response services

WINDOW ROCK – On the third day of the 2017 Winter Council Session, the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0038-17, an emergency bill to provide approximately \$242,000 in supplemental funding from the Minimum Fund Balance for 33 Navajo chapters for emergency response services due to recent heavy snow. The resolution will be sent to the Office of the President and Vice President for consideration.

Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) introduced the emergency legislation on Wednesday, after Council Delegate Benjamin L. Bennett (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) reported to the Council that the Commission on Emergency Management had approved a resolution to declare a state of emergency due to recent winter storms. Delegate Bennett serves as a voting member on the commission.

“Currently, there are 33 chapters that have less than \$10,000 for emergency services. The funding will allow the 33 chapters to help their community members. I ask that we move on this quickly,” stated Delegate Damon, who also urged President Russell Begaye to approve the resolution as quickly as possible in order to get the funding to the chapters as soon as possible.

According to the Navajo Nation Office of the Auditor General, as of Sept. 2016, the Nation’s 110 chapters had a total of \$3.4 million in emergency funds, however the 33 chapters each had less than \$10,000 with many having a zero balance.

The emergency declaration directs responsible Navajo Nation entities to immediately begin coordinating resources to meet the needs of all communities and activate emergency funds for personnel and equipment to restore and main infrastructure.

The Council also approved an amendment proposed by Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) that would restrict chapters from utilizing the funds for any other purposes besides emergency response services.

“The money should be only be used for emergency services and relief. We can’t allow chapters to begin transferring the funds to travel, pay utilities, or other non-emergency expenses. We need to keep the chapters accountable,” stated Delegate Tsosie.

Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) urged his Council colleagues to support the legislation to help chapters and reminded them that the funds may possibly be reimbursed to the Navajo Nation through a process under the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

According to the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management executive director Harlan Cleveland, chapters may receive reimbursements through FEMA if emergency funds are used in accordance with the guidelines and policies of FEMA.

On Jan. 25, the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development reported that a total of nine chapters declared a state of emergency.

Council members voted 18-3 to pass Legislation No. 0038-17 with one amendment, which required two-thirds of Council's approval. President Russell Begaye will have ten calendar days to consider the legislation once it is sent to the Office of the President and Vice President.

Please see below for a list of the 33 chapters and funding amounts approved by the Council.

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