



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation Council approves \$100 million investment for water, electricity, and capital project improvements

WINDOW ROCK – The 23rd Navajo Nation Council on Tuesday voted unanimously in support of Legislation No. 0116-18, approving an expenditure plan to invest over \$100 million for Navajo communities and families across the Navajo Nation to receive power lines, water lines, and various capital improvement projects.

The bill calls for the funds to be implemented over the course of three years in accordance with the Síhasin Fund Power line and Chapter Projects Expenditure Plan, which developed as a result of a directive issued by the Síhasin Fund Subcommittee last year.

In accordance with the directive, the Office of the Speaker began meeting with each member of the Council, officials from each of the Nation's 110 chapters, the Capital Projects Management Department, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and others to develop a project listing that required the funding to be divided equally between each of the Nation's 24 districts.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) said the approval of the expenditure plan is a reflection of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council's dedication to investing in the Nation's overall infrastructure, which ultimately provides benefits for families, chapters, and the economy.

"Since this Council took office in 2015, we have developed and approved a \$180 million investment in bulk water projects, and \$150 million investment into economic development, community development, and water projects," stated Speaker Bates. "Now with the approval of this latest \$100 million investment, this Council has invested nearly half a billion dollars to address the basic needs of our people."

The Síhasin Fund was created by the Council in 2014, when the Navajo Nation received \$554 million from the federal government as part of a settlement agreement related to litigation over the historical mismanagement of the Navajo Nation's trust assets. The settlement funds were deposited in the Síhasin Fund in order to earn interest and to grow the balance. In 2014, the Council held a series of public hearings across the Navajo Nation to hear directly from the Navajo people as to how the funding should be invested. Investments into infrastructure development

such as water lines, power lines, and road improvements were overwhelmingly supported by a majority of the people.

Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill), who presented the legislation on Tuesday, thanked his Council colleagues and many others who supported the efforts.

“This legislation will benefit a significant amount of individuals, families, and communities across the Navajo Nation,” stated Delegate Witherspoon.

Following the vote moments before midnight on Tuesday, legislation co-sponsor Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), described how the investment will benefit areas across the Navajo Nation and provide much needed services.

“Tonight, the Navajo Nation Council has approved \$100 million for capital outlay projects to help families in Pueblo Pintado who will have electricity for the first time, funding for a new chapter house in Tonalea that is desperately needed, for the senior citizen center in Hardrock that needs renovation, to finally develop the new Commercial Farm Project in Birdsprings, to a new water project facility in Upper Fruitland, to a young lady in Chichiltah Chapter named Marlene Barney, who is 94 years old and will finally be able to have the power to turn her lights on and have her grandchildren finally able to work on their homework after the sun goes down,” said Delegate Damon. “Today, we heard the voices of the people and have approved a plan to benefit all of the Great Navajo Nation.”

At the conclusion of the discussion, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council voted 21-0 to approve Legislation No. 0116-18. The Office of the Speaker will provide a detailed project listing upon finalization of the Council resolution.

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