



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee supports proposed referendum to increase president's salary

SHIPROCK, N.M. – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee considered Legislation No. 0272-18, seeking to approve and authorize an election referendum to allow Navajo voters to decide whether Title II section 1008 of the Navajo Nation Code should be amended to increase the salaries for the positions of Navajo Nation president and vice president.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake), who sponsored the legislation, stated that the referendum would also allow Navajo voters to determine the amount salaries for both positions.

“This referendum is long over due. Currently, the president earns \$55,000 and the vice president earns \$45,000. Our Nation’s leaders are one of the lowest paid elected leaders in the country. Other tribal nations and small town mayors throughout the country make triple the amount. We need to hold our Nation’s highest positions with higher value,” said Delegate Tsosie.

Pursuant to Title II section 1008 of the Navajo Nation Code, the Council may approve the salary adjustments, however, it will not become effective until approved by a public referendum.

Office of Navajo Government Development policy analyst EJ John stated that the referendum would ask if the president and vice president should get a salary increase. If answered “yes,” the Navajo voter would be presented with two options. Option one consists of a salary totaling \$85,000 for the president and \$70,000 for the vice president. Option two consists of a salary of \$102,000 for the president and \$83,000 for the vice president.

John added, there has never been a cost of living adjustment for the president and vice president since the positions were established in 1989 and if the cost of living adjustments were adjusted today, the president’s salary should have been approximately \$102,000 and the vice president’s salary at \$84,000.

During the discussion, LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi) proposed an amendment to increase the option one-salary adjustment for the president from \$85,000 to \$87,000.

“I strongly agree that the president and vice president should be compensated a fair and reasonable amount. They need to be valued because they represent the whole Nation. If we increase the salary, it could also bring forth highly qualified individuals to run for president,” said Delegate Tso.

He added that the salary adjustments should also be consistent with all the three-branch chiefs of the Nation.

The Law and Order Committee approved Legislation No. 0272-18 with a 2-0 vote with one amendment. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority for the bill.

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