



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **Health, Education, and Human Services Committee pushes for accountability for Navajo Nation Veterans Administration**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Last week, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee met with Navajo Nation veterans during a special meeting held to discuss ongoing issues and concerns regarding direct services for veterans, funding, and the lack of communication from the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President and the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration.

In a March 13 memo addressed to the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration executive director Tracey Clyde from Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), who also served in the U.S. Army, sought to convey concerns from veteran’s councils across the Navajo Nation and encouraged the administration to work closely with the HEHSC and Navajo veterans.

The memo pointed out critical issues such as short/long term goals, housing, the Veterans Trust Fund, improving policies, and updating the administration’s plan of operation. Delegate Begay commended the newly hired executive director Tracy Clyde, and encouraged the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration to inform and collaborate with the Navajo veterans councils.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) raised concerns regarding the breakdown in communication between Navajo veterans, the Office of the President and Vice President, and the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration.

“On this [social media] application we all have on our phones, Facebook, the information President [Russell] Begaye puts on there is referencing veterans and initiatives, but those initiatives are not shared with the administration or the local veterans agencies. So again, [President] is saying one thing over here by himself as an individual, but policy-wise, it’s not coming together,” said Delegate Hale.

He added that the OPVP and the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration should provide regular updates and report back to veteran’s agency commanders and chapters. Regularly, Navajo veterans approach the HEHSC and ask the committee to intervene on the issues, however, the oversight is also not receiving regular updates from the administration, said Delegate Hale.

EHSC member Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch'izhí) said a work session was recently held regarding Navajo veterans by the OPVP at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort, however the oversight was not informed of the work session, and expressed disappointment in the administration's lack of participation at the EHSC meetings when it concerns Navajo veterans.

"We have to work with the veterans better and get the information out to them. The President needs to increase communication and working relationships with the veterans and the Veterans Advisory Council. It would have been nice if Tracy Clyde was here to present and start bridging the communication gap directly with Navajo veterans," said Delegate BeGaye.

Delegate BeGaye said that the current website for the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration is not updated and does not effectively provide adequate information to veterans, and recommended that the website be improved to increase transparency and provide regular updates.

EHSC members voted 3-0 to accept the report with one directive.

The directive by EHSC members seeks to obtain a report from the executive director regarding how the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration will address the veteran's concerns, and to receive a report on the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort work session at the next EHSC regular meeting on March 26.

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