



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 26, 2018

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253

Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174

Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Resources and Development Committee receives report on proposed establishment of Navajo Nation energy office

WINDOW ROCK – On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee received a report from Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources executive director Bitah Becker, regarding a proposal to establish the Office of Energy Resources and Development.

During her report, Becker stated that the purpose of the energy office would be to foster a competitive business environment to attract investors, to engage key governmental and community representatives, to serve as an apolitical informational resource for tribal leadership, to develop policies and plans regarding energy use and corridors, and to supersede all direction and control of energy development on the Navajo Nation. Moreover, the energy office would benefit the Nation through responsible development of energy resources, added Becker.

RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) stated that the proposed energy office would help clarify concerns and issues regarding the authority and direction of future energy development on the Navajo Nation.

“It would have been beneficial if this energy office was created many years ago. Based on my observations, there is no clear directions or designation of the decision-making process regarding energy development. There is no central point of contact who would work with energy companies or the Navajo communities,” said Delegate Phelps.

According to Becker, the energy office would provide a single point of communication, uniform process, comprehensive data, and technical support for all involved parties regarding the energy market on the Navajo Nation.

RDC vice chair Council Delegate Benjamin L. Bennett (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) questioned what resources would be used to operate the energy office.

“The Nation is facing financial deficits. For example, Navajo Generating Station and Peabody are on their last leg. How will the Nation financially support this new office?” asked Delegate Bennett.

Becker stated that the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources would look for additional grants to leverage existing resources for fiscal year 2019, which would include support from the

Navajo Nation enterprises. After FY2019, the energy office would use funds from the Navajo Nation, Navajo Nation energy enterprises, and energy development, added Becker.

During the discussion, Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock) recommended that the energy office consider Navajo Fundamental Law and community input to guide their energy development decisions and planning.

“Many mistakes were made in the past regarding energy development on the Nation. Today, many of our community members are impacted by those bad and poor decisions. Many community members feel like their rights are overlooked and I highly encourage the energy office to consider the beliefs and values of our people,” said Delegate Perry.

RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) requested that the Division of Natural Resources provide the committee periodic updates regarding the development plan of the energy office.

The Resources and Development Committee approved the report with a 4-0 vote.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council