



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

Contact: Alastair L. Bitsoi, Public Information Officer

Phone: (928) 871-6384

Cell: (928) 255-2943

Fax: (928) 871-7255

abitsoi@navajo.org

www.navajonationcouncil.org

September 20, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Budget and Finance Committee votes down funding source for public education on referendum to elect judges, recommends other funding

“The committee’s decision does not reflect whether they support the referendum or not. Instead, the committee was supportive of recommendations of where to seek funds.” – Honorable Thomas Walker

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. -- A supplemental appropriation to provide public education on a referendum that would elect Navajo Nation judges during the 2010 Navajo Nation General Election failed to get any votes from the Budget and Finance Committee as a result of technical issues found in the legislation.

“The Budget and Finance Committee’s decision was based on technicality,” said Honorable Thomas Walker of a \$173,000 supplemental appropriation that failed to get committee support. “The committee’s decision does not reflect whether they support the referendum or not. Instead, the committee was supportive of recommendations of where to seek funds.”

Walker and Honorable Amos Johnson co-sponsored the \$173,000 supplemental appropriation in an effort to provide funding for public education on the referendum to elect Navajo Nation District Court judges and Supreme Court justices. The Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance (UFFB) is the funding source for the supplemental appropriation.

According to Mark Grant, controller of the Navajo Nation, the UFFB has a current balance of negative \$24 million.

“Right now the UFFB is negative and there are no funds in that account for approving supplemental appropriations,” Grant said. “As far as identifying other accounts to take money from, there are a lot of capital improvement projects that are unfinished, which is one possible source of funding for this effort. To do this, approval is needed from the Council to de-fund those projects to use for other purposes.”

Mr. Grant was available as an agent to the legislation and was requested by the sponsors to provide guidance. Specifically, Mr. Grant said a capital improvement project would have to be identified, which requires approval from the Transportation and Community Development Committee and the Navajo Nation Council. And once improved, those funds would be moved from the project for public education on the referendum.

Honorable Leonard Chee and Honorable Lorenzo Curley also indicated surplus funding in the legislative branch as possible resources to finance public education efforts for the referendum.

Despite the vote, the supplemental appropriation will proceed to the Ethics and Rules Committee and then to the full Council. On Aug. 31, the Intergovernmental Relations Committee voted 6-2 approving the legislation.

“The legislation is still going forth to the Ethics and Rules Committee and when it goes to the Council we can identify a project for funding the referendum,” said Honorable Johnson.

###