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## NAVAJO NATION VETERANS ADMINISTRATION SUBMITS CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

WINDOW ROCK – On Feb. 17, The Navajo Nation Veterans Administration submitted their corrective action plan for the veterans housing program, which was subject to an internal audit by REDW, LLC of Albuquerque in June 2016.

The purpose of the audit was to ensure the program was providing safe, quality and affordable homes for Navajo veterans, while providing job opportunities for veterans in the process.

Instead, eight audit findings revealed poor accountability of \$1.9 million in building materials, ineligible veterans selected for homes, poor construction management and uninhabitable homes.

The corrective action plan will not only improve the veterans housing program but also begin a new chapter of fiscal accountability, competent services and better client relations.

“The Office of the President and Vice President is fulfilling our commitment to our Navajo veterans. This corrective action plan identified deficiencies within the veterans administration. Our goal is to provide our veterans with safe, reliable homes and ensure proper administrative closeout procedures,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.

The corrective action plan was for FY 2014 and 2015. The veterans housing program is currently revising the housing policies and procedures manual to align provisions with the corrective action plan.

Recently, veterans service officers from the five agencies received certification as federal benefits and claims counselors and are now processing claims.

Now that the NNVA is now under the auspices of Office of the President and Vice President, Vice President Jonathan Nez said this means direct involvement with the Navajo veterans admin-

istration to ensure proper function of the housing program and effective implementation of the Navajo Nation Veterans Act.

“We will work together to ensure our veterans are housed in safe and sanitary homes. It is the least we can do for their service to this country and our Navajo Nation,” he said.

Accountability is the primary focus, along with construction management and tracking overall progress.

“Proper documentation will ensure future success of the program. The improper management of past administrations have resulted in this discrepancy for the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration, which has negatively impacted the intended goal of the housing program,” said President Begaye.

Hubert Smith, acting director of the NNVA, said there is a long waiting list, with more than 350 applicants.

“We would like to thank REDW, LLC for their help identifying our deficiencies and will learn from this audit and do a better job spending our tribal resources to serve our Navajo veterans,” he said.

Vice President Nez said partnerships with faith based groups, volunteerism and sweat equity programs could also assist with the construction of homes for veterans.

The purpose of the NNVA is to identify, assess and prioritize housing, health care, transportation, and financial needs of eligible Navajo veterans, their surviving spouses, and Gold Star Mothers.

The strategy of the veterans housing program is to reduce homeless veterans, reduce substandard and dilapidated housing, and reduce overcrowded housing conditions.

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