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COUNCIL PASSES HEALTH COMMITMENT ACT

The Navajo Nation Council passed the Health Commitment Act of 2006 during the second day of its winter session January 24, 2006 by a vote of 67 in favor and 11 opposed.

The Act, which amends Title 13 of the Navajo Nation Code, was sponsored by Council delegate Willie Grayeyes (Navajo Mountain/Inscription House), who chairs the Council's Judiciary Committee. The legislation was brought before Council during the 2005 summer session and was tabled to this session with a tabling motion by Richard T. Begay (Shiprock) and second by Orlanda Smith Hodge (Cornfields/Lower Greasewood./Klagetoh/Wide Ruins).

The Health Commitment Act was passed with three amendments, which incorporated changes recommended by the Public Safety Committee and addressed concerns regarding privacy of health records.

“The goal of this proposed legislation is to establish procedures that direct how persons who are behaving dangerously and pose a threat to the health of the larger community due to mental or specific infectious illnesses are to be managed, in order to protect the suffering persons themselves, as well as their families and communities,” the legislative summary states.

“The resulting document represents the efforts of many people throughout the Navajo Nation. It is intended to balance the rights of persons with the safety of the person and the larger community. It is sensitive to Diné traditions of care including K'é and seeks to maximize the use of community resources with forced treatment as a last resort.”

The Council also took action voting down Legislation No. 0263-05 to approve the transfer of excess federal land, facilities and infrastructure at and around the old Fort Defiance hospital. The legislation was voted down by a vote of 14 in favor and 53 opposed.

The final item under Old Business that the Council considered on the second day of its session was not acted upon because there was no motion and no second to recall the legislation, which was to approve the Navajo Nation Council Budget Session Rules of

Order. Co-sponsor Jerry Bodie (Sanostee) requested that the Council not consider the legislation until the Council directive to present to each standing committee was fulfilled.

The first day of the Council session was spent hearing reports from President Joe Shirley on the state of the nation; Congressman Rick Renzi on congressional issues; Apache County Sheriff Brian Hounshell on law enforcement activities within Apache County; the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission and the Department of Water Resources on the state of Navajo Nation water rights negotiations; the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency on the Navajo Nation's "Treatment As State"; Dine Bidziil on concerns and efforts; Navajo Nation Gaming Regulatory Executive Director Edward Locket, Jr., on the status of gaming; and Attorney General Louis Denetsosie regarding status of Peabody, C-Aquifer and meetings with the Hopi Tribe.

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