

Contact: Karen Francis, Public Information Officer  
Navajo Nation Council Office of the Speaker  
(928) 871-7160  
karenfrancis@navajo.org  
[www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **COUNCIL APPROVES NAVAJO-HOPI COMPACT**

*Also approves establishment of gaming enterprise*

The Navajo Nation Council passed historic legislation today approving the Navajo-Hopi compact and possibly ending decades of litigation concerning the land boundaries of the Navajo and Hope reservations.

Residents of the affected area who were present in the Council Chamber erupted into applause when the final vote came up on the voting board showing 75 in favor and 3 opposed.

The compact could put an end to a decades-old freeze on any development on land in the area known as the Bennett Freeze area.

As part of the compact, which negotiating teams and a mediator have been working on for four years, the Hopi Tribe would not receive any Navajo land other than the area in and around Moencopi which was already awarded to the Hopi Tribe. In addition, Navajo people will be allowed to enter Hopi land without

a permit for traditional Navajo religious practices. In turn, Hopi people would also be allowed to enter Navajo land without a permit for religious practices.

Council delegate Duane Tsinigine, sponsor of the legislation, made a plea to Council to approve the compact citing the lack of electricity and running water. Joining him in presenting to Council was co-sponsor delegate Raymond Maxx.

“This was the people’s victory today,” delegate Evelyn Acothley said immediately following the passage of the legislation.

During a press conference, President Joe Shirley said he will sign the legislation into law as soon as it gets to his desk.

Earlier in the day, the Council had approved legislation creating the first Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, sponsored by Council delegate Lawrence Platero, by a vote of 76 in favor and 3 opposed.

Platero said, “We have gaming all around us. We support them. Now it’s time we get gaming going. It’s time we get some of that revenue.”

Delegate Roy B. Dempsey noted that the Navajo people voted in favor of gaming through referendum vote.

“This is something that needs to be done today so we can move on,” Dempsey said.

Ten amendments were made on the floor, including an amendment that requires that the board membership consist of one member of the Navajo Nation from each of the five agencies.

The final item that the Council acted on today was an endorsement of Janet Napolitano for Governor of Arizona and an endorsement of Bill Richardson for Governor of New Mexico. The legislation, sponsored by delegate Tommy Tsosie, to endorse the incumbent governors in their bids for re-election in their respective states passed by a vote of 64 in favor and 1 opposed.

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