



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Council passes legislation extending Health Management Associates contract, \$5 million bill tabled

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The 21st Navajo Nation Council convened today and passed several legislations on its second day of the 2010 Spring Session at the Navajo Nation Council Chamber.

After being tabled and later discussed during a recent work session, Legislation No. 0751-09, which was sponsored by Council Delegate Roy Laughter (Chilchinbeto/Kayenta), passed the Council floor, 59-9. The bill's passage approves a three year third party contract between the Navajo Nation and Health Management Associates, Inc (HMA).

"We worked hard to build a rapport with the Navajo Nation to build trust; it's been a privilege to serve the Navajo Nation for all these years," HMA's Mark Dire said. "I feel we have done an excellent job. We know there is room to grow."

HMA is one of the largest third party administrators in the United States. Through its extension, HMA will provide dental benefits, long term disability and the implementation of a new vision plan among other benefits to Navajo Nation employees.

The Council also passed Legislation No. 0769-09, sponsored by Council Delegate Leonard Teller (Lukachukai/Tsaile/Wheatfields), 61-8. The legislation's passage allows Navajo Housing Authority to extend its current polices and procedures of carrying out US Department of Housing and Urban Development grants in compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act.

In other efforts, the Council tabled Legislation No. 0751-09, sponsored by Council Young Jeff Tom (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake), 47-25. Tom's legislation would appropriate \$5 million from the Navajo Nation Permanent Fund to Navajo Nation Chapters for the Public Employment Program and Youth Employment Program and meet the needs of people during a time of unexceptionally high unemployment.

The legislation was tabled as the Council felt it was in the best interest of the Navajo Nation to have an official financial report from the Office of the Controller detailing the Navajo Nation's current budget status. The legislation will remain tabled until the request of the Council is met later this week.

According to the Navajo Nation Code, an amendment to use any monies from the Navajo Nation Permanent Trust Fund needs 90% of the Council to vote in favor of the legislation. In other words, a minimum of 80 votes out of 88 members is required for the legislation to be lawful.

Council Delegate Ervin M. Keeswood, Sr. (Tse Daa Kaan) said, "It's going to require 80 votes for this legislation to pass. There is no way to pass this document; we are still not going to have enough votes."

Council Delegate David L. Tom (Beclabito/Gadiiahi), a proponent of the proposed legislation, expressed the need for the funds, stating, "This legislation is important to replenishing youth employment and public employment."

"When the permanent trust fund was set aside it was indicated that it would benefit the youth," Tom added. "We will be doing exactly that."

Day three of the 2010 Spring Session will continue tomorrow. You can download a copy of the full agenda and legislations at www.navajonationcouncil.org.

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