



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Western Navajo Agency Council delegates meet, plan Western Navajo Agency Decentralization Project

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation Council delegates from the Western Agency met for a caucus meeting on Feb. 25 and discussed topics regarding the Western Navajo Agency Decentralization Project.

The Council delegates discussed the need to bring government programs and services to the agency level in an effort to streamline the bureaucratic process. Council delegates also discussed the hiring of a consultant for the project and the need to obtain chapter resolutions from chapters supporting the idea. The process may also involve possible amendments to Title 26 of the Navajo Nation Code.

The Council delegates collectively agree the decentralization plan would be introduced to the Navajo Nation Council as a pilot project and it will bring services to the agency level, which could lead to other developments in the agency and eventually Navajo Nation-wide.

Supporters of the plan explained the project will lessen the burden of traveling six hours round trip to and from Window Rock and Toh Nanees Dizi (Tuba City, Ariz.), as well as from other communities from throughout the far Western Navajo Agency.

Council Delegate Lena Manheimer (Ts'ah Bii Kin/Navajo Mountain) said the decentralization project will bring the Navajo government closer to citizens, chapters and administrative staff who work for the Navajo government.

"The project will bring other services at the agency level and provide opportunities for economic development," Manheimer said. "Economic development is really necessary for our communities. We see outside boundaries off of the Navajo Nation developing faster -- this project will help eliminate a lot of stress."

"At Navajo Mountain, there is no development on the Arizona side of the Navajo Nation, only in the Rainbow City district, which is on the Utah side of the Navajo Nation," Manheimer added. "The Utah side has more development and funding through the Utah Navajo Trust Fund and there are differences between the two communities around Navajo Mountain."

The caucus envisions the decentralization plan will be similarly modeled to a county government, but will be referred to as the Western Navajo Agency government -- a unique entity to the Western Navajo Agency.

In other related efforts, Council Delegate Tommy Tsosie (LeChee) emphasized the importance of having non-certified chapters in the Western Navajo Agency locally certified through the Navajo Nation Local Governance Act.

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"On the topic of chapter certification, out of 18 chapters, we have three chapters that are certified. We have been at it this process for the last 12 or 13 years and by now chapters should be certified," Tsosie explained. "A goal of ours can be getting all chapters certified. It requires the agency staff to concentrate on those chapters that are not certified."

The caucus directed Paulson Chaco, executive director for the Office of Navajo Government Development, to develop and draft chapter resolutions to support the Western Navajo Agency Decentralization Project.

"I believe the Western Agency delegates have a legitimate concern to decentralize certain functions of the central government," Chaco said. "The Office of Government Development will assist them in achieving any goals. I look forward to working with them. It will be a big responsibility and it's my office's duty to carry out those types of functions."

Council Delegate Leslie Dele (Tonalea), caucus whip for the Western Navajo Agency, explained the opportunities this project will provide to the people of the Western Navajo Agency.

"Western Navajo Agency always takes the lead!" Dele said. "We need to do this project. We are going to do it."

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