Intergovernmental Relations Committee passes legislation, lobbying efforts to occur for Social Services

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz – The Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council met today and passed legislation relating to approving the Navajo Division of Social Services’ 2010 position report to be presented before the Obama-Biden Administration and the 111th United States Congress.

In an effort to maintain current grants and securing additional monies for various social programs administered under the auspices of the Navajo Division of Social Services, Legislation No. 0070-10, sponsored by Jerry Freddie (Dilcon/Teesto), details the need for building advocacy in preparation and development of proposed federal budgets under the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The bill passed the committee with an 8-0 vote.

The Health and Social Services Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council and the Navajo Division of Social Services will be advocating and lobbying congressional leaders in Washington regarding programs such as the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), the Social Services Block Grant (Title XX) and the Title IV-E program to name but a few social service programs.

The CSBG totals $1.15 million and its purpose its to provide support activities designed to assist low-income families and individuals in removing obstacles and solving problems that prevent self-sufficiency and to help transition those off of public assistance. The CSBG has been a constant target of elimination from the DHHS budget. The Navajo Nation will lobby for the CSBG program not to be eliminated and that the “DHHS make every effort to convey to other federal oversight departments of restoring CSBG.”

The Title XX program includes children protective services and adult protective services which the Navajo Nation contracts through the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. Title XX is at issue because the Navajo Nation has not adequately provided proper services and has never received an increase under the state of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah Title XX contracts. The Navajo Nation is requesting for direct funding for this program to streamline the contracting process and to improve communication through direct contact with funding sources allowing for tribes to operate their own grant and program.

Title IV-E refers to foster care, adoption assistance foster care and the adoption assistance program for economically poor children. The issue with this program is the Navajo Nation’s desire to create a data collection system for a tribally-operated Title IV-E plan. The recommendation by the Nation is to provide money for the estimated $3 million data collection project, the creation of an “Indian Liaison” to be established in DHHS to offer technical assistance and support to Indian tribes, and the creation of National Indian Task Force to evaluate IV-programs.

Council Delegate Freddie said the report will go to the national office and said, “As we are aware, there is an executive order on the tribal consultation process. This report is in-line with the consultation process. The lobbying efforts along with this document will help to equate services to our constituents.”

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