



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 7, 2012

MEDIA CONTACTS
Jerome Clark | 928.637.5603
Carmenlita Chief | 928.255.3428
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee presses NDOH to further progress on implementation of health care initiatives after status report
Affordable Care Act and Navajo Nation Medicaid Feasibility Study discussed

WINDOW ROCK – On Wednesday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a status report from the Navajo Division of Health addressing one of many concerns the committee had with the division’s handling of the implementation of health care initiatives on the Navajo Nation.

Roslyn Begay, NDOH program manager for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, reported to the committee in NDOH director Larry Curley’s absence, stating that the division had yet to spend funds from a \$96,491 award it received from the Navajo Area Indian Health Service to conduct education and outreach activities on the Navajo Nation pertaining to the Affordable Care Act of 2010.

“As of today, the division has not spent any of those funds. The division has not implemented the education and outreach activities,” reported Begay, who had recently been designated by Curley to be the lead on the planning and implementation of those activities.

Although “many of the other ACA provisions have already been implemented,” Begay acknowledged that the division was “very late” in completing the educational outreach activities, but that it would soon be conducting a series of six public forums across the Navajo Nation next year from January through March to educate leaders, health care providers, health board members, and the Navajo public on the Act.

News of the implementation delay did not bide well with Council Delegates Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) and Kenneth Maryboy (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teec Nos Pos, Tólikan, Red Mesa).

“You had three months to get this done,” said Delegate Hale, pointing out that education and outreach activities, along with other legislative concerns brought up months ago, were scheduled to be complete at the end of the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2013, which runs from October through December.

Delegate Hale said it was “upsetting” that NDOH did not address a number of concerns the committee had with other health care initiatives and tasks under the division’s charge.

As a result, Delegate Hale reasoned that perhaps it was appropriate to implement restrictions on the division’s budgets through the creation of budgetary conditions of appropriations and impose limitations on off-reservation travel for division directors until those concerns were met.

“I feel the same way,” said Delegate Maryboy. “It is really troublesome that the head of the program is not even here to make the report to us, and yet there are many things that need to be dealt with.”

Delegate Hale explained that health care issues of concern the committee had on topics such as Medicaid expansion and health insurance exchange were very important issues to the Navajo people, especially elders.

“I understand you are sincere and you’re concerned about why we have not begun the education on Navajo Nation,” said Begay, “but I have to assure you that since I have been designated to take the lead on this, I will assure this committee that we will activate the planning and implementation activities.”

Nearing the end of discussion on NDOH’s report, Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi Tó ii) said he was most interested to learn more about the Navajo Nation Medicaid Feasibility Study, which was authorized by Congress through the permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 2010.

Delegate Phelps suggested for NDOH to provide briefing reports to the committee on the feasibility study that began on the Navajo Nation in July 2012.

Congress expects submission of the Feasibility Study Report by March 13, 2013. Review of the Navajo Nation Medicaid Feasibility Study draft report will occur next week, Begay said.

The committee has scheduled a strategic work session with NDOH on Dec. 21 and 22 to progress toward thorough understanding and completion of the Nation’s most current and pressing health care issues and initiatives. The location has tentatively been set in Window Rock.

The goal of the strategic session, said Delegate Hale, is “to get things done. That’s the intent.”

###