FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 26, 2013

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee votes
to rename the Office of Youth Development to ‘Diné Y.O.U.T.H.’

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee met on Wednesday, to
discuss Legislation No. 0199-13, which amends the plan of operation for the Office of Youth Development, housed under the Department of Diné Education.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahi, Whiterock) stated that the bill’s primary intent is to rename the Office of Youth Development to ‘Diné Y.O.U.T.H.’ to move the program in a new direction.

Diné Y.O.U.T.H. advocates for the development of a resilient and healthy generation of youth by providing the following programs: youth career incentives, recreation, youth counseling, high school preparatory and enrichment, and the Boys & Girls Club of Diné Nation.

The program’s acting department manager, Virginia Nelson said the amendments would assist the program in serving Navajo youth up to the age of twenty-four and allow the Boys & Girls Club of Diné Nation to become a sub-affiliate.

Speaking in favor of the bill, Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizi) said he believes in the youth on the Navajo Nation, and acknowledged the need for consistent leadership within the program.

“I’m concerned about the program’s budget, it is very much reduced and the kids don’t have money to do anything,” said Delegate Butler. “I support the Office of Youth Development, but the program needs the foresight to capture grants and funding for youth-oriented activities.”

Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) motioned to include an amendment on page 4, line 25 of the legislation, that would allow students to maintain the ‘Diné Y.O.U.T.H.’ website.

HEHSC members approved the amendment with a vote of 4-0.

Delegate Witherspoon emphasized the need for the program to establish a College Enrichment Program Database, an on-line listing of various youth opportunities, for the youth to create and maintain.
“The youth can create a website that includes information about academics, athletics, internships, and employment programs at colleges and universities,” said Delegate Witherspoon. “If our kids have the opportunity to experience a college campus, they can begin to imagine themselves as a college student there one day.”

Delegate Simpson also said that he will continue to support legislations to improve youth services and encouraged HEHSC members to seek funding through the Navajo Housing Authority for the development of youth centers.

HEHSC members approved Legislation No. 0199-13 with a vote of 5-0.

The HEHSC serves as final authority for the legislation.

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