



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 15, 2013

MEDIA CONTACTS
Carmenlita Chief | 928.255.3428
Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253
nlnb.communications@gmail.com

Law and Order Committee receives update regarding funding shortfalls for the Na’Nizhoozhi Center, Inc. in Gallup, NM

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, members of the Law and Order Committee received a report from Jay Azua, acting director of the Na’Nizhoozhi Center, Inc. regarding ongoing funding shortfalls that could force the closure of NCI as soon as next month.

NCI is seeking short-term emergency funding in the amount of \$300,000 to fund the program through June 2013, and an additional amount of \$1.4 million to ensure operation through June 2014, according to Azua.

NCI was established in 1992 through an intergovernmental agreement between the city of Gallup, the Pueblo of Zuni, the Navajo Nation, and McKinley County to serve as a non-medical alcohol crisis intervention and treatment center for the city of Gallup and McKinley County.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) expressed his appreciation for NCI’s services and encouraged fellow LOC colleagues to support forthcoming legislation to provide funding for NCI to continue its services.

On Dec. 24, the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Division of Health, and the Navajo Nation Department of Behavioral Health Services provided \$300,000 to NCI to continue operations through the winter season.

Azua attributes reduced funding for NCI to the poor economic conditions in recent years.

Delegate Yazzie pointed out that NCI is also seeking funding from the state of New Mexico and other sources, and also suggested that other entities should also contribute.

“The city of Gallup and McKinley County are making large profits from alcohol sales and we need to put pressure on them to contribute to NCI as well,” Delegate Yazzie said.

LOC member Council Delegate Elmer Begay (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone) expressed disappointment that NCI does not receive more funding from the McKinley County liquor excise tax, a five-percent tax on alcohol sales imposed on retailers.

According to Azua’s report, the McKinley County liquor excise tax provided \$27,000, or two-percent of NCI’s grant funding in 2012.

LOC member Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) also voiced dissatisfaction for the distribution of tax revenue from alcohol sales.

“I have my reserves for how border towns take advantage of Navajos or Native Americans in all aspects, including economics,” said Delegate Shepherd. “You see it in taxation as well, because we get very little tax dollars.”

Delegate Shepherd continued on to affirm that the roots of alcoholism need to be addressed.

“We’re going to be coming back every year, and every year statistics are going to show that we need more and more money to help our people,” said Delegate Shepherd. “We really need to address the root of the problem.”

At the conclusion of the discussion, Delegate Yazzie reminded the committee that legislation to secure funding for NCI is forthcoming.

LOC members voted 2-0 to accept the report from NCI.

NCI representatives are scheduled to present a report at the next Naabik’iyátí Committee meeting on May 16 at 10 a.m. in the Navajo Nation Council Chambers.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org