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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee discusses report from Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs regarding home construction

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee met on Wednesday and discussed an update report from the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs, regarding the progress of construction of 15 homes in each of the Nation’s five agencies.

On Sep. 9, the Navajo Nation Council passed Legislation No. 0193-13, amending the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund, allowing for the construction of 15 homes and to provide minor renovations and repairs, for Navajo Veterans in each of the five agencies annually, for the next four years.

“We are working with several of the Navajo Nation’s departments to acquire a vendor inventory and maintaining expenditures so that we can make the most of our money,” said DNVA executive director David Nez. “Right now we are in the hiring process of the construction teams. This is being done through the agencies.”

According to Nez, the department is doing everything possible to ensure the homes are built on-time by reviewing shovel ready sites, identifying vendors that can deliver materials on schedule, and recruiting reliable plumbing and electrical services.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) suggested that the department provide clear communication between DNVA and Navajo Veterans.

“There needs to be clear communication about the entire process. Who will get these homes, who will be building these homes, and how the money is being spent,” said Delegate Hale. “The Council will want to know the cost savings, so they know the money is not being spent on administrative costs and travel.”

Nez added that DNVA has recently submitted a proposal to the State of Arizona requesting matching funds that could increase the number of homes constructed and renovations.

“There are a lot of veterans out there that need this assistance. Clear information is always useful because the chapters are very excited about this,” said HEHSC vice chair Council Delegate Charles Damon II (Bááhááli, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí’, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). “People have been inquiring about who will be hired as laborers. This is the information the chapters need.”

Delegate Hale suggested that DNVA develop a report for the Navajo Nation Council, inclusive of blue prints, costs, and hiring processes.
The HEHSC will vote whether to accept the report at their next meeting, scheduled for Nov. 12 in Leupp, Ariz.

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