



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
October 8, 2013

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**Law and Order Committee approves bill to  
eliminate sales tax on fresh food items on the Navajo  
Nation and tables bill to impose sales tax on junk food**

**SHIPROCK, N.M.** – Last Friday, the Law and Order Committee approved Legislation No. 0290-13, seeking to eliminate sales tax on fresh food items such as fruits, vegetables, water, nuts, seeds, and nut butters.

“We are in pursuit of a healthy Navajo Nation and to improve the health of our Diné people,” said health advocate Denisa Livingston with the Diné Community Advocacy Alliance.

According to the report, the elimination of sales tax on fresh foods would encourage Diné citizens to purchase healthier food items and alleviate grocery costs.

“We have an epidemic of diabetes on the Navajo Nation,” stated prime legislation sponsor Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahi, Whiterock). “Eliminating the sales tax on fresh foods shows that we are working toward a healthier Navajo community.”

Delegate Simpson stated that the legislation is being introduced in conjunction with Legislation No. 0289-13, which seeks to amend Title 24 of the Navajo Nation Code by enacting the Healthy Diné Nation Act of 2013.

The Healthy Diné Nation Act of 2013 aims to impose an additional two percent sales tax on various junk food items, with proceeds going towards funding Community Wellness Projects. The current sales tax rate is five percent.

LOC members voted 2-0 to table Legislation No. 0289-13 to obtain further clarification of the bill.

“Both legislations will work together to discourage the purchase of junk food items,” said Delegate Simpson.

LOC members commended the efforts of DCAA and Delegate Simpson, and made recommendations pertaining to the legislation.

“When this legislation goes to the Naabik’iyátí’ Committee, I will make the recommendation to insert that a signed tax-exempt notice be posted on the fresh food items, so it is clear to consumers which foods are sales tax-free,” said LOC member Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock).

LOC member Council Delegate Duane Tsinigine (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K’ai’bii’tó, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) expressed his concern regarding the lack of representation from the Office of the Navajo Nation Tax Commission, and stated that they need to be a part of the discussion regarding the sales tax exemptions.

At the conclusion of the discussion, LOC members praised the legislation’s intent to decrease diabetes on the Navajo Nation and promote healthy living among Diné people.

LOC voted 2-0 to pass Legislation No. 0290-13. The legislation now goes to the Resources and Development Committee for consideration.

Legislation No. 0085-13, a similar bill that was previously introduced by Delegate Simpson during the Council’s Summer Session, sought to impose a junk food sales tax and eliminate tax on fresh foods. However, it was voted down by the Council due to confusion over language in the legislation. Council members recommended that the bill be presented as two separate legislations to address both issues respectively.

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