FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Law and Order Committee receives report regarding the possible reversion of federal funds from the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee received a report from the Navajo Nation Office of the Controller regarding the possible reversion of federal funds for the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project.

According to the report, NNOOC identified approximately $14.3 million in potential federal carryovers for NNSDP dating back to FY2003. However, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services authorized carryovers in the amount of $3.5 million, at the request of NNSDP.

“NNOOC is not quite sure why NNSDP did not request to carry forward the full amount of $14.3 million,” said NNOOC project manager Laura Johnson. “They are also having difficulty fully expending their annual awarded funds.”

Johnson also said that NNSDP was previously given the opportunity to claim the additional $10.8 million difference of the total federal carryover.

LOC members expressed disappointment and questioned the large amount of unspent funds by NNSDP.

“The need for a special diabetes program is there, the money is there, so why aren’t these monies being used?” asked LOC member Council Delegate Elmer Begay (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone).

In response, Johnson stated that there may be confusion at the management level of the program over guidelines for spending the awarded amounts, and ultimately funds are not being spent, possibly as a result of precautionary measures.

“It is shameful that we have a diabetes epidemic in our Nation, and we have the money, but we are not even utilizing these funds to fully address these issues,” said LOC member Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock).

After further reviewing the past carry over amounts, LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) recommended having a joint work session with NNSDP, NNOOC, Navajo Nation Office of Management and Budget, Navajo
Nation Division of Health, Indian Health Service, and the Health, Education and Human Services Committee.

“The unspent funds are money the Navajo Nation is in much need of, and it should not be reverted back to the U.S. Dept. of HHS,” said Delegate Yazzie. “We need to assist NNSDP to develop a spending plan to ensure that all the federal funding is expended to avoid reversion of these funds.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, LOC voted 2-0 to accept the report.

The joint meeting is tentatively scheduled for Oct. 28.

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