FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Resources and Development Committee approves $4.1 million for the Navajo Transitional Energy Company, LLC and the Navajo Energy Policy

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee considered and approved two significant legislations related to energy issues on the Navajo Nation: Legislation No. 0305-13 and Legislation No. 0276-13.

Legislation No. 0305-13 is sponsored by Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsah Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) and seeks approval for a $4.1 million from the Undesignated Unreserved Fund Balance for Navajo Transitional Energy Company, LLC., to cover expenses associated with the acquisition of BHP Navajo Mine.

“I believe that with a united front between Speaker Naize and President Shelly, the acquisition of this mine will take place,” said Delegate Bates.

According to the legislation, in order to close on the transactions for the acquisition of the Navajo Mine from BHP Billiton, NTEC requires an initiative capital infusion from the Nation in the amount of $4.1 million.

During an Oct. 4 press conference at Upper Fruitland chapter house, President Shelly stated that he would only sign Legislation No. 0305-13 if the Council approved the Navajo Energy Policy.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) expressed disappoint with President Shelly’s statements at the Oct. 4 press conference and recommended that a work session be held to address concerns of purchasing the mine.

In response, Delegate Bates recommended that the President’s Office work with the Legislative Branch to ensure both are on the same page regarding the Navajo Energy Policy.

“The Nation has resources, in this case it is coal. In the past, the Nation brought in an outside entity to develop that resource and we have benefited from the economic stimulus,” said RDC member Council Delegate Roscoe Smith (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill). “I understand how important this is, but we need to make use of an investment that’s already there.”

The RDC approved Legislation No. 0305-13 with a vote of 5-0.
The legislation now moves on to the Budget and Finance Committee, Naabík’íyáti’ Committee, and Navajo Nation Council for consideration.

Following the vote, the RDC considered Legislation No. 0276-13, which would rescind the 1980 Navajo Nation Energy Policy and approve the Navajo Nation Energy Policy of 2013.

“The energy policy took a lot of time and effort by the committee, chair, and task force. When you look at the policy you will see your [RDC] input,” said legislation sponsor Delegate Smith.

Navajo Division of Natural Resources executive director Fred White, said the policy directs the Nation to be an energy distribution system that benefits not only the Navajo, but also its neighbors.

“The energy policy draft was taken to the public, then we came back to the committee and redeveloped after several work sessions,” said White. “We address how to handle renewables and coal fire power plants. The policy states that these are areas we need to go into.”

RDC chair Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) commended the RDC for their work to craft the policy to the needs of the Navajo people, by ensuring the right wording and ideas of the People were included throughout the process.

The RDC approved Legislation No. 0276-13 with a vote of 4-0.

The legislation now moves on to the Naabík’íyáti’ Committee and Navajo Nation Council for consideration.

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