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April 13, 2014

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Budget and Finance Committee receives report regarding ‘imminent threats’ from uranium mining

WINDOW ROCK – On Friday, the Budget and Finance Committee received a report from a community-based non-profit organization known as, Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining, regarding “imminent threats” from uranium mining on the Navajo Nation, specifically in the Eastern Navajo Agency.

According to the report provided by ENDAUM president Jonathan Perry, the effects of uranium mining pose imminent danger to the Navajo people and cause further contamination, even from cleanup efforts that attempt to dispose of uranium mine sites.

“The main purpose [of ENDAUM] is to protect our water, air, and the general health of the community members in the Crownpoint area, as well as many other areas on the Navajo Nation affected by uranium mining,” said Perry.

Perry said his organization is requesting support from BFC members as well as other delegates to advocate for the passage of Legislation No. 0091-14, sponsored by Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), which seeks to rescind Resolution RDCD-69-13 which was approved by the Resources and Development Committee on Dec. 23, 2013.

RDCD-69-13 acknowledged the right-of-way and surface use of the Churchrock Properties by Uranium Resources, Inc. Perry argues that the resolution directly conflicts with the Navajo Nation Diné Natural Resources Protection Act of 2005 and the Radioactive Materials Transportation Act of 2012.

BFC member Council Delegate Nelson BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch’izhi) expressed his support of the initiative and said that uranium mining on Navajo land needs to end permanently.

“The entire Navajo Nation should support these efforts to end uranium mining, and all 110 chapters throughout the Nation need to pass resolutions in support of closing and cleaning up all the mines,” said Delegate BeGaye.

BFC vice chair Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin) said remnants from uranium mining are still present today and continue to affect many Navajo people in the Western Navajo Agency, as well.

“The areas I represent in the [Western Navajo Agency] felt the effects of uranium mining and we are still seeking compensation from the [uranium companies] and the federal government for Navajo miners that are still struggling with health issues due to mining uranium near the Oljato area,” said Delegate Nez.

Delegate Nez said the cleanup of the Skyline Mesa Mine site, located near the community of Oljato, is an example of a successful effort in which the federal government allocated approximately \$7.5 million to dispose of waste from the abandoned mine and attempted to stabilize the radiation levels.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Delegate BeGaye said the Navajo Nation should begin to recognize that individual lives are more important than seeking ways to obtain additional revenue through uranium mining.

BFC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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