



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Dził Yijiin District Court funds approved by Navajo Nation Council

WINDOW ROCK – During the Summer Council Session on July 20, the Navajo Nation Council unanimously supported Legislation No. 0404-15, approving supplemental funding from the Navajo Nation’s Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of \$340,000 to renovate and remodel a modular building to be used as a court facility for the Dził Yijiin District Court.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi), who serves as a member of the Law and Order Committee which oversees the Judicial Branch, explained that the existing facility is in great need of renovation due to its current dilapidated condition. He also noted that LOC members have made judicial facilities one of the top priorities to improve the overall function of the Judicial Branch.

According to documents attached to the bill, the existing facility is in need of improvement to allow court hearings and arraignments to be conducted to address the district’s growing caseload.

If the bill is signed and approved by President Russell Begaye, improvements to the facility will include the installation of a new roof system, interior renovation, foundation repairs, and grading to improve drainage issues and parking access.

According to a resolution passed by the Dził Yijiin Regional Council in April 2015, the courts had to move four times in recent years due to the lack of a permanent and sustainable court facility.

Since 2015, LOC members have met with officials from the Judicial Branch including acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan, and received several reports stressing the need to address outdated and dilapidated facilities.

Following the passage of the legislation on Wednesday, acting Chief Justice Sloan said the funding would benefit the courts and allow it to function and serve the judicial needs of the district.

“The Dził Yijiin Judicial District was created in 2012 and has operated in temporary facilities since then. The current facility is inadequate for a growing district. The appropriation will assist the staff in ensuring judicial services to the public continue to be carried out there. Our needs for safe and secure facilities are great and we are seeking ways to ensure that our services are not negatively impacted as we address these needs,” stated acting Chief Justice Sloan.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), thanked his Council colleagues for supporting the committee's efforts to assist the Judicial Branch and its courts.

"I'm grateful to my colleagues on the Law and Order Committee and the entire Council for their support in rehabilitating the Dził Yijiin District Court facility," stated Delegate Yazzie. "I respectfully ask President Begaye to support the Legislative and Judicial Branches by signing the resolution into law."

According to the Office of the Controller, the remaining balance in the Navajo Nation's UUFB is approximately \$7.6 million as of July 14.

The Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved Legislation No. 0404-15 with a vote of 19-0. President Begaye will have ten calendar days to consider the resolution once it is sent to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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