23rd Navajo Nation Council
Office of the Speaker

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Council supports the creation of the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council

PHOTO: Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty and members of the Navajo Nation Youth Council during the third day of the 2017 Spring Council Session on April 19, 2017 in Window Rock, Ariz.

WINDOW ROCK – On Wednesday, the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0019-17 during the third day of the Spring Council Session. If signed into law, the bill would amend Title II of the Navajo Nation Code to establish the Navajo Nation Youth Advisory Council.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz't'l'í) explained the intent of the legislation and added that having Navajo youth at the decision-making table was important.

"The intent of the legislation is to empower and acknowledge our Navajo youth and their contribution to the Navajo Nation government decision-making. Our Navajo youth are an untapped resource that can provide innovative approaches to modern issues by blending traditional and modern concepts. It is time for our Navajo youth to be at the table," stated Delegate Crotty.

The legislation states that the youth council will be established under the executive branch and consist of 12 members, from ages 14 to 24-years old. Two members would be appointed from

each of the five Navajo agencies and two members will served to represent the Nation at-large. Members would be recommended by the Office of Diné Youth and appointed by the President, the Speaker, and the Chief Justice.

The current representatives on the Navajo Nation Youth Council are as follows:

- Jackie Johnson, Western Navajo Agency representative
- Chris Brown, Western Navajo Agency representative
- Triston Black, Central Navajo Agency representative
- Cali Chee, Northern Navajo Agency representative
- Deshawna Begay, Northern Navajo Agency representative
- Deshane Begay, Northern Navajo Agency representative
- Cody Morgan, Eastern Navajo Agency representative
- Virlencia T. Begay, Ft. Defiance Agency representative
- Marlon Lexington Murphy, Ft. Defiance Agency representative
- Megan LaRose, At-large Navajo Agency representative

In August, President Russell Begaye, Speaker LoRenzo Bates Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland), and Acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan signed an agreement to create a Navajo Nation Ad Hoc Youth Council to establish a mechanism that would allow the voices of the Navajo youth to be heard.

"It takes emotional, psychological, spiritual, and mental strength to become a leader. I hope each of the youth council members have the stability to carry on the duties and responsibilities. You have to know yourself and your identity to help your people. I really encourage our Navajo youth to have bi-cultural skills to make policy decisions," stated Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock).

According to the legislation, the purpose of the youth council would be to provide policy advice to the President, Navajo Nation Council, and the Judicial Branch in regards to youth issues and concerns. The youth council would identify issues impacting Navajo youth and offer guidance and solutions to tribal leaders.

During the discussion, Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tółikan, Red Mesa) shared a concern for the legislation, which centered on the well being of youth council members.

"It is hard for me to approve this legislation. As a father and a leader, we protect our children from negative conflicts and issues. Some people have harsh words and thoughts and it is sensitive for our children to be in that negative atmosphere. I am worried about their well being," stated Delegate Filfred.

Council Delegate Steven Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a') recommended the youth council to consider including Navajo principles and values within the enabling legislation and to consider the recommendations from other youth organizations within the Navajo Nation.

At the conclusion of Wednesday's discussion, the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0019-17 with a 15-2 vote. The President 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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