23rd Navajo Nation Council
Office of the Speaker

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Perry Charley confirmed by Council to serve on the Diné Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission

Photo: Perry Charley addresses questions from the Navajo Nation Council along with Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty on Tuesday, July 18, 2017 during the Summer Council Session in Window Rock.

WINDOW ROCK – On day two of the Summer Council Session, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council considered Legislation No. 0161-17 to appoint Perry Charley to the Diné Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission to represent the Northern Navajo Agency. The commission is tasked with representing and advocating on behalf of communities affected by uranium mining on the Navajo Nation.

Each commissioner would serve a five-year term, which would start when a quorum of commissioners has been established. Currently, commissioner candidates are still being vetted.

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) stressed the importance of

appointing commissioners to begin analyzing and developing recommendations to begin remediating land areas affected by uranium mining.

“We would like to have this commission up and running. I hope this is the time we really come together and prioritize to put an end to the uranium legacy,” said Delegate Crotty. “Mr. Charley has exceptional credentials and has the background to begin work towards the Nation’s remediation goals.”

Delegate Crotty added that there are New Mexico State University Navajo student researchers looking to clean and filter out contaminated water in a way that can make access to clean water available to affected communities. She said her hope is that the commission will begin developing relationships with academic and research institutions to aid with remediation efforts.

According to the legislation, Charley has nearly 40 years of direct working and research experience as a scientist pertaining to uranium contamination, impacts, and remediation. He is currently employed as the director and senior researcher at the Diné College Diné Environmental Institute.

“I would like to incorporate knowledge of traditional and environmental ties to the land to aid in remediation. We must restore balance to the lands affected by uranium mining and do our best to get them back to pre-mining conditions,” said Charley.

Charley resides in Beclabito, N.M. He is Ozéí Táchii’nii (Hopi People of the Red Running into the Water Clan) and born for Áshįjhi (Salt Clan). His maternal grandfather is Hooghan Łání (Many Hogans Clan) and his paternal grandfather is Naakai Dine’é (Mexican People Clan).

In support of the legislation, Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahat’a Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) stated that it was important for the commission to also begin developing procedures to educate Navajo communities regarding the impacts of uranium and to show how they can begin remediation efforts in their areas.

“In one of my chapter areas, our water has been contaminated by uranium. I would like the commission to educate our communities and promote outreach. You developed proposals and research with schools, so I would like to see this presented in my communities regarding the dangers and how we can remediate this problem,” said Delegate Smith.

He added that schools near the Rio Puerco River are currently using a filtration system for the contaminated water. Delegate Smith said he is eager to begin working with the commission to begin the reclamation and remediation process within his communities.

Council members voted 19-0 to approve Legislation No. 0161-17 with one amendment, to appoint Charley to the Diné Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission.

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