



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee votes down intergovernmental contracts with the federal government citing the need for more funding for detention services

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee issued a “do not pass” recommendation for Legislation No. 0455-17 and Legislation No. 0456-17, which seek to approve and authorize the renewal contracts and annual funding agreements between the Navajo Nation and the U.S. Department of the Interior for adult and juvenile detention services beginning Jan. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2023.

The annual funding agreements between the Department of the Interior and the Nation are self-determination contracts under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahi, Whiterock), who sponsored both legislations, requested the committee’s support to approve the agreements to continue adult and juvenile detention services and operations for the next five years.

“Approving the intergovernmental agreements would continue all detention services on the Nation, which is highly needed within the Nation’s public safety system. Moreover, the agreements have completed the 164 review process, which validates support from the departments,” said Delegate Perry.

During the discussion, LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) raised several issues and concerns regarding the negotiation process for the intergovernmental agreements.

“First of all, these contracts were rushed through the process and the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety did not take the time to take a stance to address the funding needs of the detention programs. Second, the NNDPS priorities are not reflected in the agreements. Third, the funding shortfalls of the programs are not reflected in the agreements,” said Delegate Begay, adding that all intergovernmental agreements should fully fund all the needs that are addressed in each agreement.

Navajo Nation Department of Corrections director Delores Greyeyes stated that the detention programs need sufficient funding to deliver adequate services. We need to advocate for more funding, she added.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) emphasized that the committee has been working diligently to increase all contract funding.

“There has been drastic improvements within NNDPS, but they need more funding to continue to lead great public safety initiatives and services. Therefore, we must work together to stand firm on all intergovernmental agreements,” said Delegate Yazzie.

The Law and Order Committee issued a “do not pass” recommendation for Legislation No. 0455-17 and Legislation No. 0456-17 with a vote of 1-2. The Budget and Finance Committee will consider the legislations next. The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee serves as the final authority for both bills.

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