24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Delegates Henio and Smith Jr. Selected as Leadership for Budget and Finance Committee

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – In its first meeting of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, the Budget and Finance Committee (BFC) selected its chair and vice chair to lead the committee for the next four years.

New BFC leadership. L-R: Chair Jaime Henio & Vice Chair Raymond Smith, Jr.

In a unanimous vote, Council Delegate Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee) was selected as the chair, and Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahat'a Dziil, Tsé Si'áni, Wide Ruins) was chosen for vice chair.

"I'm excited to be named chair and I feel really blessed to have the confidence of my committee members to be their chairperson," Delegate Henio said. "As a committee, we need to look at the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

He added that he's looking forward to working with his fellow committee members, and he encourages them to approach their roles with an open mind and to consider "outside-the-box" ideas that may benefit the economic future of the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Elmer P. Begay (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone) sponsored Legislation 0028-19, which confirms the committee's leadership selections.

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) said he was looking forward to the discussion the committee would have, and that each member had the qualities to be chair or vice chair.

"We needed proactive individuals to be a part of this committee," Speaker Damon said. "Members of this committee and its leadership are going to need lots of foresight for moving the 24th Navajo Nation Council forward."

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) was also nominated to be chair of the committee but lost consideration by a 4-2 vote. She addressed her peers with strong ideals the committee needed for its leadership.

"We have a very clear purpose; we are the body that provides guidance to the Council and government on our financial makeup, and what is our recommendation to make a strong financial source for the Navajo people," Delegate Crotty said.

BFC members analyze and make decisions on the Navajo Nation's finances, which include an "all-in" approximate annual budget upward of $800 million. They also provide oversight of numerous funds, including investments totaling approximately $5 billion.

In order to be as informed as possible, the committee scheduled orientation presentations with various Navajo Nation Government agencies to gain a better understanding of their processes, scope of work, and the impact the committee's oversight will have.

The six-member committee is planning orientations with the Office of the Controller on Feb. 28th, and with the Department of Justice, Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of Legislative Council the following Friday, Mar. 8th.

"The key thing is orientating and educating committee members on the really complex financial operation of the largest tribe in the United States," said Navajo Nation Controller Pearline Kirk. "Our dialogue will educate them to consider everything, at all levels, to make the right decisions for the Navajo people."

A last-minute addition to the agenda by Delegate Crotty called for a directive requesting the Navajo Transitional Energy Company to provide its latest annual report to the committee. The committee approved the measure to better understand the company's financial stature in a 5-0 vote.

Upcoming BFC meetings include its regular meeting on March 5th at 10 a.m., and a strategic session scheduled for March 22nd to discuss the Nation's priorities with branch chiefs and to formulate priorities for the committee.

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