



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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New enforcement provisions and more funding for resources requested to help Animal Control Officers prevent dog attacks

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer are recommending changes to Navajo Nation laws to give more enforcement authority to animal control officers to deter dog attacks against people. They are also seeking additional funding to better control the growing dog population by hiring more animal control officers, developing more animal shelters, increasing spay and neuter opportunities, increasing animal registrations and microchipping outreach efforts, and working with organizations to provide more adoption programs for unwanted animals.

Last Wednesday, President Nez and Vice President Lizer met with Division of Public Safety Executive Director Jesse Delmar, Navajo Police Chief Phillip Francisco, and officials with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to discuss Resolution CJN-34-21, which sought to amend Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code to establish criminal penalties for vicious dog attacks. The measure was introduced as an emergency legislation and approved by the Council on June 3, without review and consideration by the oversight Standing Committees and without input from law enforcement and wildlife officers. The resolution was vetoed on Friday.

“We have to work together with the Council on a comprehensive approach to address the high number of dogs roaming our communities. In meeting with our law enforcement officers, we all recognize the good intentions of our lawmakers, but we agree that the changes to Title 17 don’t do enough to address the root of the problem. We want to work with the Council members to amend the appropriate sections of laws to give authority to animal control officers to issue citations to dog owners when their pets attack or injure a person. We are also seeking their support to approve approximately \$1.2 million to hire more animal control officers and to support proactive measures that address the root cause of these problems to help prevent any more lives lost to dog attacks. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of the families who have lost loved ones to attacks by dogs,” said President Nez.

Law enforcement officers and fish and wildlife officials stated that the Navajo Nation only has five officers to help address dog attacks. They also explained that when animal control officers arrive to the scene of an alleged dog attack, they often take custody of the dog, but are unable to issue a

citation or take further action against the dog owner(s) to hold them accountable. Amending Title 13 of the Navajo Nation Code would allow the animal control officers the authority to do so.

The Navajo Nation Animal Control Program provides free microchips for pets along with registration of pets as well, however, officials reported that those efforts slowed significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have the framework in place to get more pets registered and microchipped, which allows pets to be located if they are lost and also helps to identify owners of those pets. It is the personal responsibility of pet owners to care for their animals and to ensure the safety of other people. We thank the 24th Navajo Nation Council for taking action to amend Title 17. Their actions are well intended, but we want a new legislation to be introduced that gives authority to animal control officers, who are often the first ones to the scene of any dog attack, to enforce laws that eventually enable the Judicial Branch to penalize owners when their dogs viciously attack people,” said Vice President Lizer.

Recently, Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez and Second Lady Dottie Lizer have led a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of spaying and neutering pets to help control the animal population and reduce the number of unwanted animals on the Navajo Nation. The Nez-Lizer Administration looks forward to working with the 24th Navajo Nation Council to improve laws and promote proactive measures to prevent injuries and loss of life due to dog attacks.

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