



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee supports amendments to the Veterans Trust Fund to provide additional funding for Navajo veterans



PHOTO: The 25th Navajo Nation Council's Budget and Finance Committee deliberates Legislation No. 0108-23, to allow more funding from the Veterans Trust Fund set-aside to be used for programs, services, and benefits for Navajo veterans.

KAYENTA, Ariz. — On Tuesday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council's Budget and Finance Committee met in Kayenta, Ariz. and voted in support of Legislation No. 0108-23, which seeks the Navajo Nation Council's approval to amend Title 12 of the Navajo Nation Code to resolve conflicting language and allow more funding from the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund set-aside to be used for programs, services, and benefits for Navajo veterans. The legislation requires final approval from the Navajo Nation Council and President.

In accordance with Title 12, the Navajo Nation Council is required to set-aside four-percent of the Navajo Nation's projected revenues in the annual Comprehensive Budget. Half of the four-percent is allocated for veterans programs, services, and benefits and the other half is allocated for the veterans housing program.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Carl Slater (Tsaile/Wheatfields, Lukachukai, Round Rock, Tsé'ch'izhí, Rock Point) stated that the bill provides a "technical fix" that will rectify conflicting language that was previously adopted in 2018 and 2021, and align with the wishes of Navajo veterans. The current language calls for more of the funding to be reinvested back into the principal trust fund rather than the direct services and assistance that many Navajo veterans rely on.

"These amendments will help the Nation to avoid another funding shortfall for Navajo veterans benefits and assistance like we experienced during last year's comprehensive budget session. Thousands of our veterans rely on the assistance that is provided through this set-aside funding and it's our responsibility to ensure that the language in Title 12 conforms to what the veterans support," said Delegate Slater, who also stated that he will seek a supporting resolution from the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council before the legislation goes before the full Council for consideration.

Legislation co-sponsor Council Delegate Seth Damon (Baahaali, Chilchiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) stated that the amended language will provide more financial stability for the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration and ultimately help many Navajo veterans and their families.

"Many of our warriors are elderly and many have disabilities that limit their ability to provide for their families. This legislation is one way that we can show our appreciation to them and their loved ones for their service and sacrifices for us all. We look forward to having the Council and President's support as this legislation moves forward," said Delegate Damon.

The Budget and Finance Committee voted 4-0 in support of a "do pass" recommendation for the legislation, which now moves forward to the Naabik'iyati' Committee and the Navajo Nation Council for consideration.

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