



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee supports amendments to the Navajo Nation Child Support Act



The Law and Order Committee unanimously approved amendments to the Navajo Nation Child Support Act.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee approved amendments to the Navajo Nation Child Support Act, increasing child support payments and modifying the inclusion of in-kind, non-cash contributions and services.

Legislation No. 0195-24, sponsored by Law and Order Committee Vice Chair Cheryl Yazzie, seeks to amend and update the Navajo Nation Child Support Guidelines and the Child Support Schedule, which have not been updated in approximately 30 years.

“In 1994, the Child Support Act was acted on by the Navajo Nation Council. Since that time, the cost of everything has increased. The current amendments increased child support payments by 10 percent to 20 percent of the parental gross income. It also amends the basic work and visitation schedule, which determines the guidelines for child support,” Vice Chair Yazzie said.

The Navajo Nation Child Support Guidelines are based on the Income Shares Model that is predicated on the concept that the child should receive the same proportion of parental income that he or she would have received if the parents were together. A basic child support obligation is computed based on the combined income of the parents.

Amendments also excluded 'means-tested' public assistance received by parents from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Guardians fixed income, into gross income computations.

Legislation No. 0195-24 amends the definition of in-kind and non-cash contributions for child support obligations. Courts can now assign a fair market value to in-kind contributions or services and apply the amount to the current obligation.

Examples of in-kind contributions are a cord of firewood, livestock, home repairs, payment of custodial parent's home utilities, game (elk, deer, turkey, etc.), pallets of wood pellets or coal, ceremonial expenses, and maintenance of children's basic needs.

The legislation initially called for a 10 percent increase to child support payments. Law and Order Committee Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton motioned to amend this amount to 20 percent.

"We should be thinking of our children and putting them first. I want to see an increase of 20 to 25 percent. Often, we hear parents make excuses for not being able to get a job but hard-working parents don't get any sympathy," Chair Charles-Newton said. "I would like to include traditional ceremonial expenses as in-kind contributions as well."

Vice Chair Cherilyn Yazzie said she sponsored the bill due to the increase in the cost of living while child support payments and the means by which parents can contribute stays the same.

"It's important that we continue to support our children and families. That is the intent of these amendments," Vice Chair Yazzie said.

Legislation No. 0195-24 was unanimously supported by the Law and Order Committee with a vote of four in favor and zero opposed. The legislation will now move forward to the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee who serve as final authority.

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