



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Navajo Nation Council passes legislation supporting internship program in Washington, D.C.



Honorable Delegate Dr. Andy Nez sponsored legislation to secure funding to continue the Navajo Nation Washington Office Internship Program.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council held a special session and passed Legislation No. 0004-24, supporting the Navajo Nation Washington Office's (NNWO) internship program.

The legislation's intent is to ensure that Navajo students are not hindered by financial barriers, such as travel costs and living expenses, which have historically limited their participation in such programs.

During the session, legislation sponsor Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez explained that the NNWO had to move forward with the internship program without the approved supplemental funding due to delays in the process. If signed into law, the legislation will replenish funds used by the NNWO to support the summer internship program.

Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Justin Ahasteen explained that the funding for the internship program had to be reallocated from the NNWO's operational budget, which has created a deficit in other critical areas. As a result, funds originally intended for the NNWO's operations were utilized to ensure the program could proceed.

He also highlighted the success of the program, which enabled several Navajo students to engage in federal policy evaluation, to gain valuable experience, and give back to the Navajo Nation through their work.

The Council approved Delegate Germaine Simonson's amendment to replace the existing budget exhibits with updated documents reflecting these changes. Delegate Simonson's amendment ensures that the financial documentation accurately reflected the NNWO's expenditures and future needs.

Council members also expressed concerns about the timing and management of the funds, given that the end of the fiscal year is approaching. Council Delegate Carl Slater, Vice Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, questioned the fiscal responsibility of approving additional funds so close to the fiscal year's end, suggesting that these funds might not be utilized effectively before they lapse.

Council Delegate Shaandiin Parrish, who chairs the Budget and Finance Committee, highlighted discrepancies in the budget forms, noting that a substantial portion of the new budget was allocated to travel expenses, which appeared to be inconsistent with the stated intent of supporting internships. This raised further questions about the management of the NNWO's budget for purposes other than what was originally intended.

Delegate Parrish put forth a directive requiring the NNWO to report back to the Naabik'iyatí Committee within 30 days. This report will detail the travel expenditures authorized by the NNWO in FY2024, including any funds used to cover travel expenses for the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0004-24 by a vote of 10 in favor and 5 opposed. Once the resolution is certified and delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren will have up to ten calendar days to consider the resolution.

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