



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **25th Navajo Nation Council passes legislation to amend tobacco tax to include nicotine and electronic smoking products**



**Budget and Finance Committee Vice Chair Carl R. Slater stands with representatives from the Air is Life Coalition.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.**— On Wednesday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously supported Legislation 0145-24, a resolution that aims to amend the existing tobacco products tax and enact a new tax on electronic smoking and nicotine products.

Sponsored by Delegate Carl Slater, the legislation is designed to deter tobacco use, support cessation, particularly among Diné youth, and is projected to result in long-term healthcare cost savings for the Navajo Nation.

“Every dollar that goes into the treatment of preventable diseases caused by nicotine addiction is a dollar that could be spent on other healthcare needs. With a very constrained fiscal situation in our healthcare system across the Navajo Nation, it’s incredibly important that we passed this legislation,” said Delegate Slater.

Experts project the resolution to increase the tax revenue, part of which will go to the Office of Traditional Cultural and Spiritual Healing (OTCSH) within the Navajo Department of Health (NDOH). The OTCSH will use these funds to improve the well-being of the Diné people and to preserve traditional cultural teachings and practices. Although authorized by NDOH’s enabling legislation, the office has never received funding.

This legislation will raise the tobacco products tax and extend it to currently untaxed items like nicotine pouches and electronic smoking devices. The goal is to use taxation as a deterrent against nicotine addiction, addressing the high rates of tobacco use that impact public health in our communities.

The tobacco industry uses electronic cigarettes and vaping devices to attract youth and teens, introducing them to seemingly harmless products before transitioning them to traditional cigarettes.

The legislation also amends eligibility for NDOH grants funded by the tax, allowing for more flexible funding distribution and broader participation from various health organizations.

Additionally, a portion of the tax revenue will be allocated to the Navajo Nation's Department of Health, which will direct these funds toward traditional healing practices and education initiatives that distinguish between commercial tobacco products and their sacred traditional use.

Projected long-term healthcare cost savings from this legislation are estimated at \$41.7 million.

Legislation 0145-24 passed unanimously, with a vote of 18 in favor and none 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 it.

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