



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Resource Committee Advances Slate of Bills, Including Hemp Research and Sustainability Consideration

MARIANO LAKE, N.M. – Convening in Mariano Lake, NM, the Navajo Nation Council Resources and Development Committee considered six bills, including legislation on sustainability and hemp research, in its May 22, 2019 regular meeting.

In discussing Legislation 0098-19, which seeks to implement sustainable principles into Navajo Nation governance, delegates discussed methods by which implementation could occur and the potential implications of inaction.

“As part of our sustainability effort we need to expand our food sovereignty and our *own* agricultural system,” said Delegate Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee), the legislation’s sponsor. “Oklahoma is under water and catastrophes are happening everywhere. [Extreme weather] affects the economy,” said Delegate Henio.

The legislation follows the Navajo Nation’s first ever Sustainability Symposium. Navajo Office of Government Development Director Edward K. Dee, whose office organized the symposium and helped draft the legislation, expounded upon the momentum energizing this topic.

“We held our first ever Navajo Sustainability Symposium and it generated a lot of excitement for those who attended and for the presenters who came from all over the country,” said Dee.

The bill passed unanimously.

Another bill at the forefront of environment, development, and research, Legislation 0125-19, advanced from the committee in a 3-1 vote. The bill, sponsored by RDC Chair Rickie Nez (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland), authorizes Navajo Agricultural Products Industry to operation a pilot hemp research with New Mexico State University within a narrow exception to Council Resolution CO-75-18.

The resolution presently prohibits the “growth, development or propagation” of industrial hemp on the Navajo Nation until the government adopts regulations and obtains all applicable permits.

The pilot project would be conducted on a university operated research plot it has leased from NAPI since the 1960s and is compliant with 2014 farm bill provisions that permit university-affiliated hemp research.

“This plant that the research and development is going to be growing is going to be tested to make sure that it’s below the 0.3 percent THC threshold,” said Lionel Haskie, operations and maintenance manager at NAPI. The 0.3 percent THC threshold differentiates industrial hemp from marijuana under the farm bill.

Haskie assured the group that plant testing will be rigorous within a NAPI, Navajo Dept. of Agriculture, and third-party testing company regulatory framework. Plants that exceed the 0.3 percent THC threshold will be destroyed by burning.

“It is critical that the investigation of the viability of safe and legal industrial hemp cultivation be conducted within a rigorous paradigm as outlined in this bill,” said Chair Nez. “The potential projects are cutting edge and deserve consideration by the Council.”

One research project proposes using hemp as a barrier crop for airborne diseases and pests in chile cultivation. Another project proposes using the hemp cultivation for phytoremediation, potentially for abandoned uranium mine sites. Researchers will measure hemp plants at harvest for metal uptake before exploring the idea further.

The pilot hemp project legislation advances for Naabik’íyáti’ Committee consideration.

The committee also passed the following legislations unanimously.

- **0103-19**, Sponsor: *Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau)*. Legislation proceeds to the Budget and Finance Committee.
An Action Relating To Resources And Development And Budget And Finance Committees; Approving A Change In Project Scope In Resolution CAP-35-18; Amending The Project Scope To Add Design For The Mariano Lake Multi-Purpose Building Project
- **0101-19**, Sponsor: *Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahí, Whiterock)*. Legislation Proceeds to the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee.
An Action Relating To Budget And Finance Committee, Resources And Development Committee And Naabik’íyáti Committee And Navajo Nation Council; Allocating \$2,500,000 From The Sihasin Fund To The Crownpoint Chapter And Approving And Adopting The Crownpoint Youth Center Fund Expenditure Plan Pursuant 12 N.N.C §§ 2501 – 2508
- **0108-19**, Sponsor: *Delegate Mark Freeland*. The legislation proceeds to BFC.
An Action Relating To Resources And Development And Budget And Finance Committees; Approving A Change In Project Scope In Resolution CAP-35-18; Amending the Project Scope To Add Design For The Tse’ii’ahi’ (Standing Rock) Head Start Building Project
- **0123-19**, Sponsor: *Delegate Mark Freeland*. RDC is final authority.

An Action Relating To Resources And Development Committee; Approving A Mission Site Permit For 3.5 Acres for The Native American Indian Religion Of Eastern Diné Chapter In The Vicinity Of Nageezi Chapter, Navajo Nation

- **0121-19**, Sponsor: *Kee Allen Begay Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Blue Gap/Tachee, Tselani/Cottonwood)*. *The legislation proceeds to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee.*

An Act Relating To Budget And Finance, Resources And Development, Naabik'iyáti', And Navajo Nation Council; Approving Supplemental Funding From The Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance In The Amount Of Three Million Dollars (\$3,000,000) For The 110 Navajo Nation Chapter's Summer Youth Employment.

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