



# 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council

## Office of the Speaker

---

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 22, 2019

### **MEDIA CONTACT**

Carl Slater, Director of Communications and Government Affairs  
Bronson Peshlakai, Sr. Public Information Officer  
(928) 318-4896  
nlnb.communications@gmail.com

## **Law and Order Committee Makes Appointments, Marks Up Title II Bill**

**TWIN ARROWS, Ariz.** – The 24th Navajo Nation Council Law and Order Committee met today, April 22 to consider several appointment legislations, a grant acceptance concurrence, and one Navajo Nation Code revision at the Twin Arrows Public Safety Substation in Twin Arrows, AZ.

Before moving to the legislative agenda, the committee received a report from Apache County Sheriff Joseph Dedman and Commander Michael Cirivello on the availability of bed space at the Apache County Jail in St. Johns.

Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock), LOC chair, prefaced the report by saying the closure of the Window Rock and Shiprock jails compels the Nation to consider all options available to fulfill its corrections responsibilities.

Since the county jail averages 110 individuals nightly, Dedman and Cirivello noted that, if the Nation desired, it would be able to accommodate Navajo Nation incarcerated individuals within its 169-bed facility.

Delegate Charles-Newton asked several questions of Cirivello, who oversees the jail, including whether they have any traditional religious or rehabilitative resources available or whether there are any lawsuits pending against the jail for inhumane treatment.

Cirivello explained that they take good care of their inmates and have never lost a lawsuit filed by an inmate. In terms of religious practice, they do not provide any services, they only provide space for practice.

Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi), LOC vice chair, made a directive motion to refer the matter to Navajo Nation Dept. of Corrections Director Delores Greyeyes and Police Chief Phillip Francisco. He directed the relevant parties to work cooperatively with the Dept. of Justice to evaluate the feasibility of housing incarcerated individuals at the Apache County Jail.

After significant deliberation, the committee withdrew its consideration of legislation 0079-19, preventing it from progressing to the Naabik'íyáti' Committee. It seeks to amend the 2 N.N.C. § 104 and 11 N.N.C. §8 to prevent council delegates from serving in elected county positions.

Delegate Otto Tso, the legislation's sponsor, explained his rationale for introducing the legislation.

"The way I see it, you're serving two sovereigns if you're serving as a county official. When you take the oath for the state or county, your allegiance is to them. There are issues between the state of Arizona and Indian tribes," Delegate Tso stated.

During the presentation of the legislation by Delegate Tso, Office of Legislative Counsel Attorney Ron Haven advised that the LOC may want to consider tightening up some language with respect to the scope of the legislation and make several technical corrections that Delegate Eugene Tso (Chinle) flagged.

After making the technical corrections to the legislation, the committee discussed broadening the scope of the reform effort to make all Navajo Nation elective office requirements internally consistent.

In turn, the delegates spent substantial time marking up the legislation to determine whether the bill would apply to county, state, and federal school boards, in addition to elected county offices. Eventually, the committee settled on a work session to comb through the legislation more thoroughly.

As the bill is currently written, it would not take effect until the 25th Council.

In brief, the committee made the following appointment actions.

- 0058-19: appointing Delegate Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Łichíí, Steamboat) as a shareholder representative to the Diné Development Corporation.
- 0059-19: appointing Delegate Otto Tso as a shareholder representative to the Navajo Nation Oil and Gas Company.
- 0063-19: appointing Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton as a member representative to the Navajo Transitional Energy Company.
- 0069-19: the committee took no action on the legislation to allow its sponsor, Delegate Rickie Nez, time to present at the next meeting. The legislation designates two LOC members to the Naabik'íyáti' Committee Title II Reform Subcommittee.

The committee also approved 0078-19. The legislation provides a council resolution concurrence to a Bureau of Indian Affairs highway safety grant accepted by the previous presidential administration.

The grant seeks to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries across the Navajo Nation's roadways by establishing an interdisciplinary team of training personnel to conduct enforcement and preventative operations.

The LOC will meet next on May 6, 13, and 20 at their building in Window Rock, AZ. On May 28, the committee will meet in Shiprock with the Department of Behavioral Health Services.

On June 4, the committee is seeking to hold a joint-meeting with the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee to address probation judgements requiring counseling and other behavioral health services.

# # #

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit [www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org) or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council