



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee supports bill to continue veterans housing funding through fiscal year 2018



PHOTO: Law and Order Committee members with Navajo veterans who marched to Window Rock in support of Legislation No. 0258-17 during the committee's regular meeting on Sept. 18, 2017.

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee considered Legislation No. 0258-17, which seeks the Navajo Nation Council's approval to extend the availability of funds from the Veterans Trust Fund for the Navajo Nation's Veterans Housing Program until the end of fiscal year 2018, or the end of September 2018.

In Sept. 2013, Council approved CS-48-13, which provided a portion of the annual set-aside from the Veterans Trust Fund to construct up to 15 homes and to provide repairs and renovations for Navajo veterans in each of the five agencies for a period of four years.

Legislative sponsor, Council Delegate Steven Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a'), stated that the intention is to continue addressing the housing needs of

Navajo veterans through FY2018, which begins in October of this year and ends in September 2018.

“The approved legislation, CS-48-13, states that all unexpended funds will not lapse back into the Veterans Trust Fund through fiscal year 2017 and expire thereafter, unless reauthorized. The legislation requests for the unexpended funds for veterans homes to be carried over to fiscal year 2018 so the Navajo Veterans Affairs can continue to build homes,” stated Delegate Steven Begay.

If approved by the Council, the bill would allow the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration, which is under the Office of the President and Vice President, an additional year to construct and renovate homes for Navajo veterans.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) asked if the Veterans Administration provided any recommendations regarding the reauthorization.

“The veterans administration needs to present their plan regarding the veterans housing program. The veteran housing money is still sitting there. How is the administration addressing it?” asked Delegate Begay.

Delegate Begay also pointed out that the legislation references an audit report conducted in January 2017 that calls for numerous corrective actions to be addressed by the veterans housing program, and how the administration plans to resolve those issues.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) requested information regarding the current status of funding balances for the veterans housing program.

In response, Delegate Steven Begay noted that the information will be gathered and presented when the legislation goes before the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee for final consideration.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) thanked a group of veterans and commanders from the Fort Defiance Agency, Central Agency, Northern Agency, Houck, Bahast’a’a’, Sawmill, Many Farms, and Cornfields who marched to Window Rock in support of the legislation.

The Law and Order Committee approved Legislation No. 0258-17 with a 2-0 vote. The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

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