



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee supports position statement for FirstNet and AT&T to provide public safety broadband network on the Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK – On Wednesday during a special Law and Order Committee, the committee considered Legislation No. 0047-18, which requests FirstNet and AT&T to develop the nationwide public safety broadband network for police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical responders on the Navajo Nation and to accept the nation-to-nation relations. The legislation also requests the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety and Navajo telecommunications programs to provide assessments and strategic plans for all areas on the Navajo Nation with no or little broadband network services.

FirstNet was established in 2012 by congress, which is designed to deliver a nationwide broadband network dedicated to public safety, to strengthen public safety users' communications capabilities enabling them to respond more quickly and effectively to emergencies.

Within a year, the Navajo Nation Council issued its support for FirstNet through several resolutions that were sponsored by Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), who has long advocated for the acceptance and implementation of the FirstNet program to strengthen telecommunication infrastructure on the Nation to improve emergency response efforts, particularly in rural areas.

In 2017, with the continuous support from the Council, the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah have opted-in the federal program.

Delegate Begay, who sponsored the legislation, stated that the next steps are to outline and recognize the nation-to-nation relations with FirstNet and AT&T and determine how the next phases of the project will be completed to benefit the entire Navajo Nation.

“The legislation’s intent is to establish nation-to-nation consultation on all phases of the project. We want a successful partnership with FirstNet and AT&T, thus, all 110 chapters on the Navajo Nation could have broadband network services,” said Delegate Begay.

During the discussion, Division of Public Safety executive director Jesse Delmar added that the division would aid in collecting assessments in areas on the Navajo Nation with little or no broadband networks before the program initiates.

LOC member Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. (Shonto, Naa'tsis'Áán, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin), said the assessments and strategic planning for broadband networking on the Nation needs to be completed as soon as possible due to the high level of public safety concerns on the Nation.

“There are many dark zones, no cellular services on the Nation. Police officers, firefighters, and emergency responders need communication resources to ensure the safety of all Navajo citizens. Therefore, the NNDPS needs to put public safety concerns as a priority,” said Delegate Daniels.

Delegate Begay added that the goal is to have public safety broadband network coverage for the entire Navajo Nation within six years or less.

The Law and Order Committee voted 2-0 in support of Legislation No. 0047-18. The Naabik'íyáti' Committee will consider the legislation next, and serves as the final authority for the bill.

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