



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation requests McKinley County Sheriff's Office to uphold cross-commissioning agreement by responding to emergencies

WINDOW ROCK – The Navajo Nation officially issued a request to the McKinley County Sheriff's Office in New Mexico, to respond to emergency calls in accordance with a cross-commissioning agreement that was signed by officials with the Navajo Nation, McKinley County, and the state of New Mexico in 2007. The request was included in Legislation No. 0340-17, which was approved by the Naabik'íyáti' Committee on Thursday, with a vote of 14-2.

The cross-commissioning agreement allows Navajo Nation and county police officers to respond to emergencies across jurisdictional boundaries for several purposes including, providing shorter response times in cases of emergencies and preventing jurisdictional issues from creating "sanctuaries" for violators of the law.

McKinley County is located in the northwestern part of New Mexico and encompasses several Navajo communities including Crownpoint, Tohatchi, Thoreau, Ramah, and others.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), who also serves as the chair of the Law and Order Committee, was joined by Crownpoint Police Capt. Henry Moore in asking the committee for their support of the resolution to help law enforcement officers better serve Navajo communities and to protect Navajo people within the county.

During the presentation before the committee, Delegate Yazzie and Capt. Moore said they have received numerous concerns from community members stating that county officers do not respond to emergency calls in some instances, which has led to additional problems.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreón, Whitehorse Lake) said although he supports Navajo law enforcement officers he strongly opposes the resolution, stating that if one entity fails to uphold the cross-commissioning agreement that it should be invalidated. He also stated that by having the Navajo Nation "beg" for the county to provide services it diminishes the Nation's jurisdiction and sovereignty.

He recommended that the Nation lead a campaign to have Navajo voters in McKinley County vote the current sheriff out of office during the next election, if the sheriff does not want to do his job and uphold the cross-commissioning agreement. He also recommended that constituents and tribal leaders lobby and share their concerns with New Mexico state legislators and request them to reallocate the Sheriff's Office's funding to provide the services that are being neglected.

Several committee members suggested that an invitation be extended to the current county sheriff to meet with Council members to discuss the issues. However, Delegate Yazzie informed them that the Law and Order Committee previously invited the sheriff to provide a report and the sheriff did not show up.

Delegate Yazzie also presented the committee with several chapter resolutions supporting the legislation. He added that he would use the supporting resolution from the Naabik'íyáti' Committee to go before the McKinley County commissioners to attempt to resolve the issues and make the cross-commissioning agreement more effective.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Naabik'íyáti' Committee approved Legislation No. 0340-17 with a vote of 14-2. The committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

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