



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Naabik'iyáti' Committee passes legislation for \$1.9 million from UUFB for 2020 transmission charge



PHOTO: Speaker Seth Damon sponsored Legislation No. 0373-19 for the approval of \$1.9 million from the UUFB for payment of the 2020 transmission charge. The legislation passed by a vote of 21-0.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Dec. 19, 2019 – The Naabik'iyáti' Committee convened for the Dec. 19 regular meeting and passed Legislation No. 0373-19 by a vote of 21-0 for consideration by the Navajo Nation Council. The bill was for the approval of \$1,900,694.10 from the Undesignated, Unreserved Fund Balance for the 2020 transmission charge for use of the 500-megawatt power line pursuant to the Navajo Generating Station extension lease.

The legislation was approved by the Budget and Finance Committee and Resources and Development Committee before advancing to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee for consideration. Speaker Seth Damon (Baahaali, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) sponsored the bill and said the Navajo Nation would receive use of the transmission line for a period of 35 years upon payment. “For the first 10 years, the Navajo Nation will be responsible for capital costs and from years 11 to 35, the Nation would be responsible for capital costs and operation and maintenance costs,” he said.

The U.S. Department of Interior sent a bill for collection Dec. 4 for the \$1.9 million payment, which is due Jan. 3, 2020. Speaker Damon said the Resources and Development Committee would be responsible for the negotiation of terms and agreements, including working with the Budget and Finance Committee on the fund management plan. “The \$1.9 million is an advance payment that will be repaid,” Speaker Damon said.

Delegate Eugenia Charles Newton (Shiprock) asked how much funding was available in the UUFB and if the legislation completed the 164 review process. As of Dec. 5, the balance of the UUFB was \$16,817,205. Delegate Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, Tohajiilee) sponsored the legislation and said the BFC asked the same questions during the legislative process and that it successfully passed 164 review. Other delegates asked if there was a mechanism included to collect interest from the transmission line payments once an energy company was selected.

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Navajo Department of Justice Attorney April Quinn said she couldn't go into great detail unless the committee went into executive session. "The DNR work group has been approached. We don't have anything ready to go as of Monday," she said. Quinn said the 500-megawatt transmission line has been put on the market and that a workgroup comprised of staff from the Division of Natural Resources and Office of the President and Vice President are planning projects to be executed by 2022 or 2023.

Annual revenue projections for the marketing of the 500-megawatt power line in 2020-2021 range from \$888,000 for 20 percent use of the 500-megawatt transmission line to \$7,230,000 for 100 percent usage. Delegate Daniel Tso (Baca-Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) said the main criticism of the transmission lines was that the power generated by NGS did not provide electricity to a single hogan. Delegate Raymond Smith (Houck, Klage-toh, Lupton, Nahata Dziil, Wide Ruins) agreed and said, "I hope that it doesn't just bypass grandma and grandpa again. Let's work with a company that is really user friendly," he said. The legislation passed by a vote of 21-0 and was forwarded to the full Council for consideration.

Legislation No. 0331-19 authorized a contract between the Navajo Nation and U.S. Dept. of Interior for a five-year term for the Water Monitoring and Inventory Program, including an annual funding agreement and scope of work. Jason John, Navajo Department of Water Resources Director, said the contract has been in place for the past 30 years. He said the \$250,000 annual funding allows for the salary of four staff, including data collection for snow surveys, stream data and the drought status report.

Delegate Otto Tso (To' Nanees Dizi) asked about committee involvement for the negotiation of the '638 contract. "I request that you inform your oversight committee of negotiations. Is the committee at the table?" he asked. John confirmed oversight participation and said, "There are water rights negotiations with Pueblos of Laguna and Acoma. The headwaters begin at Smith Lake and in Ramah, flowing eastward into the Rio Grande Basin." The talks are preliminary right now, he said, adding that the pueblos are interested in purchasing water from the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. The legislation passed by a vote of 19-0.

The committee adjourned before the start of the special session for the 24th Navajo Nation Council at 1 p.m.



PHOTO: Jason John, director of Navajo Water Resources Dept., said the '638 contract between the Navajo Nation and U.S. Dept. of Interior has been in place for more than 30 years. Legislation No. 0331-19 passed by a vote of 19-0.

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