



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee supports regulations to penalize violators of the Storage Tank Act

COVE, N.M. – On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee voted in support of Legislation No. 0069-18, approving the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency’s regulations that set penalties for violations of the Navajo Nation Storage Tank Act, which includes processes for issuing field citations and administrative penalties to gas station owners that own leaking underground gasoline tanks that may lead to contamination of soil and water.

In 1995, the Navajo Nation Council passed a resolution establishing the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency and enacted the Navajo Nation Environmental Policy Act, which allowed the protection of Navajo land and the people.

Thereafter, a number of environmental laws were established including the Navajo Nation Storage Tank Act, which demonstrated the Navajo Nation’s commitment to environmental protection by protecting surface water, groundwater, and subsurface soils from hazardous liquids and substance of underground storage tanks.

RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii), who sponsored the legislation, asked for the committee’s approval to implement the regulations to ensure that the Navajo Nation Storage Tank Act is upheld.

“The Nation needs to continue to protect the surface and ground waters, and surface soils, however, penalties are needed to enforce regulations. Businesses who have contaminated or leaking storage tanks need to be held accountable for the damages and consequences. The penalties are intended to discourage any other violations from reoccurring,” said Delegate Phelps.

Navajo Nation EPA Storage Tank Program environmental specialist Warren Roan, stated that the regulations would allow the Navajo Nation EPA to issue field citations with monetary fines to a non-compliant storage tank facility. The responsible party would then be required to submit payment to NNEPA for non-compliance of the Navajo Nation Storage Act. The regulations are needed to ensure the protection of water and soil from contamination, added Roan.

The Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0069-18 with a 3-0 vote and serves as the final authority for the bill. The NNEPA regulations in regards to the Navajo Nation Storage Tank Act can be accessed at the Navajo Nation EPA's website at <http://navajonationepa.org>.

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