



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee supports legislation to restore critical funding in the FY2017 Comprehensive Budget

WINDOW ROCK – Budget and Finance Committee members on Tuesday approved Legislation No. 0393-16, which would amend the Navajo Nation’s FY2017 Comprehensive Budget that was approved by the Navajo Nation Council in September. FY2017 began at the start of October and ends at the end of September 2017.

Following the Council’s approval of the budget in September, the presidential line item veto authority was used to eliminate approximately \$8.3 million for the Nation’s 110 chapters, Navajo Area Agency on Aging, district grazing officials, the Judicial Branch, Department of Diné Education, and many other vital programs and initiatives. The \$8.3 million that was line item vetoed then became unallocated funding.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááhááíí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí’, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), who also serves as chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, explained that the overall amount needed amend the budget totaled approximately \$7.8 million, which would be derived from the unallocated funding. He also noted that some of the amounts were reduced due to the fact that the first month of FY2017 has passed.

On Nov. 6, Council members met with President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez to discuss budget items. After several hours of discussion, the Nation’s leadership reached an understanding that would allow an amended budget through Legislation No. 0393-16.

“In the spirit of K’e we sat down together and talked things out and we were able to find some middle ground that will allow divisions, programs, and initiatives to be funded at the levels that were approved by the Council,” said Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland).

During the BFC meeting on Tuesday, BFC member Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) motioned for an amendment to allocate approximately \$7.8 million into the FY2017 budget.

Among the budget items included in the \$7.8 million is approximately \$935,000 for the 110 chapters, \$1.3 million to restore working hours for employees of Navajo Area Agency on Aging, \$689,000 for the Judicial Branch, \$847,000 for district grazing officials, \$118,000 for the

Department of Diné Education, and \$350,000 for criminal investigations under the Division of Public Safety. BFC members voted 2-1 to approve amendment one.

Office of the President and Vice President chief of staff Arbin Mitchell, said President Begaye is agreeable to the amended legislation, however, he requested that the Conditions of Appropriations within the Comprehensive Budget be removed. BFC members voted 2-1 to approve amendment two, which removed the COA's from the budget.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Budget and Finance Committee members voted 2-1 in support of Legislation No. 0393-16. The legislation moves on to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee for further consideration.

The Navajo Nation Council is scheduled to convene in a special session on Nov. 17 at 3:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber in Window Rock to consider the legislation. If Council approves the legislation, President Begaye will have ten calendar days to consider the resolution once it is delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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