



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL  
Office of the Speaker

**MEDIA CONTACTS**

Kyron Hardy, Interim Communications Director  
Kolton Nephew, Legislative Staff Writer  
E-mail: nnlb.communications@gmail.com

## 24th Navajo Nation Council holds public hearing with the Eastern and Western Agency Veterans Organization

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**PHOTO:** Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. explains the contents of two legislations to Navajo Veterans of the Western Agency at the Monument Valley High School Nash Auditorium in Kayenta, Ariz.

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Wednesday, members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council finished their two-day public hearing with the Eastern and Western Agency Veterans Organization to discuss Legislation No. 0021-22 and Legislation No. 0024-22, both of which directly affect Navajo Nation veterans.

The public hearing for Eastern Agency was held at the Navajo Technical University Wellness Center in Crownpoint, N.M. on Tuesday, September 13, 2022. While the Western Agency public hearing was held at the Monument Valley High School Nash Auditorium in Kayenta, Ariz. on Wednesday, September 14, 2022.

“As long as I am council delegate, I will continue to voice the concerns of all veterans, so I request all of our veterans to support these two legislations” said Delegate Begay. “From today’s hearing I can assure everyone that the Veterans Trust Fund will not be utilized for any other administrative service and I thank those who attended for addressing their concerns and potential solutions.”

Among those attending the public hearings were Hon. Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Hon. Council Delegate Pernell Halona, Hon. Council Delegate Edison J. Wauneka, Hon. Council

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Delegate Nathaniel Brown, Hon. Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Hon. Council Delegate Paul Begay, and Navajo Nation Veterans Administration Executive Director James Zwierlein.

Sponsored both by Delegate Begay, Legislation No. 0024-22 would amend the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund statute to require the creation of separate business unit numbers whenever Navajo Nation funds are awarded to local veterans' organizations.

Legislation No. 0021-22 would amend the selection process of the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration Executive Director and amend the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council (NNVAC) to become the Navajo Nation Veterans Board of Commissioners with additional authority.

Delegate Begay presented and discussed the proposed changes to Legislation No. 0021-22 which would allow greater input and support on the selection process of the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration Executive Director from both the Navajo Nation Council and the NNVAC.

During the hearing, Eastern Agency veterans made comments regarding the Legislation at hand which was that the Executive Director should serve at the pleasure of the Navajo Nation Council who will only make recommendations on behalf of Navajo Nation veterans with no political affiliations.

In opposition, some Western Agency veterans questioned why the legislation wishes to transfer the oversight of the NNVA Executive Director position to the Navajo Nation Council in an effort to remove the current Executive Director.

Western Agency veterans also opposed the creation of separate business unit numbers due to difficulties distributing funds within the veterans organizations. The veterans also highlighted that one business unit warrants one budget for each agency and if 110 business units are created for all the Navajo Chapters, Chapters will not distribute the funds leading to carry-overs.

Additional comments on the two legislations were the new language written that would impact veterans on a CVO level. Additional comments were made regarding the chain of command that leaves many veterans and veteran organizations on a local level without a voice to advocate better communication.

A few key topics that were brought up were the lack of support that chapter veteran organizations face and the potential for both the legislations to become a political issue that would delay the legislative process. Additional proposed recommendations that were made concerning Legislation No. 0024-22 were to establish a Housing Program Manager to administer the Navajo Veterans Housing Program.

"As elected leaders, we must continue to work together to resolve these issues for our veterans across the Navajo Nation while maintaining a total sense of transparency in order to better communicate what is happening on a legislative level," said Speaker Damon. "Although there may be confusion on the language within both of these legislations, I am appreciative of Delegate Begay's tentative listening and clarity."

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