

Navajo Nation adopts new legislative priorities

Written by Staff Reports

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WINDOW ROCK – On Jan. 17 during a special meeting, the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee unanimously approved legislation adopting the Navajo Nation’s legislative priorities for the 2018 New Mexico State Legislative Session, which began Jan. 15.

Legislation co-sponsor Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill), who also chairs the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee’s State Task Force, explained that the State Task Force met with the Nation’s lobbyists to discuss and develop the list of priorities contained in the legislation.

Among the priorities include securing additional state funding for Capital Outlay projects if more funds are available, increasing Navajo Nation representation on the Tribal Infrastructure Fund Board, lobbying for additional funds to improve school bus routes on the Navajo Nation, and advocating for measures to address hate crimes and discrimination, sexual assault prevention, and human trafficking.

The resolution also authorizes Navajo Nation leaders to lobby against potential efforts to remove the existing tribal exemption in any “Gas Tax at the Rack” bill that may be introduced during the session, and to lobby against any attempt to introduce “fantasy gaming” bills that would violate the Nation’s gaming compact with the state of New Mexico.

State Task Force member Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé

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Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) said the resolution would serve as a template and provide guidance for the Nation's leaders when they meet with state legislators during the session. During the Jan. 17 discussion, Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) proposed an amendment to include more information in order to make the listing more comprehensive and informative for state leaders.

Additionally, he recommended that the Nation include the need to eliminate dual taxation and the need for Medicaid for Navajo constituents on the list of priorities. Naabik'íyáti' Committee members approved the amendment by a vote of 13-0.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee voted 13-0 to the legislation, and serves as the final authority for the bill. State Task Force members are scheduled to meet with New Mexico state legislators throughout the duration of the ongoing 30-day New Mexico State Legislative Session.

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