

\$4 million for 2022 Summer Youth Employment programs approved by the Navajo Nation Council

Written by Staff Reports
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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — During a two-day Special Session last week, the 24th Navajo Nation Council passed Legislation No. 0066-22, approving \$4 million from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for Summer Youth Employment Programs with 110 Navajo Nation chapters. Sponsored by Council Delegate Eugene Tso, the bill passed by a vote of 20 in favor and one opposed.

A motion by Vice Chairman Carl Slater passed with an amendment to allow funds to be utilized to reimburse chapters for their verified expenditures since May 2022 for summer youth employment expenses.

“Two years of this pandemic has impacted employment opportunities for our students, and this \$4 million will put our summer youth programs on track. Our high school and college students deserve every opportunity to work, serve their communities, and gain some professional development experience. I appreciate the Navajo Nation Council for passing this legislation and making our children a top priority this summer,” Eugene (Chinle) said.

Chairman Daniel Tso got a motion passed for a directive to the Division of Community Development, Office of the Controller, Office of Management and Budget, and all other Navajo programs to take necessary steps to expedite and prioritize the processing and implementation of the summer youth employment program.

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The DCD provided the following breakdown of program allocations to five agencies:

- Eastern Agency - just over \$1 million
- Fort Defiance Agency - just over \$974,000
- Shiprock Agency - almost \$764,000
- Western Agency - just over \$683,000
- Chinle Agency - just over \$525,000

“Many of our students have been employed since May, so it was critical that we reimburse our chapters properly. We need to ensure the annual budget reflects our summer youth employment programs so that chapters do not run out of funding in the future. Our students will benefit greatly from the summer program as they work to develop their resumes and learn critical skills necessary to be successful in the professional world,” Slater, (Round Rock, Rock Point, Tséch’izí, Lukachukai, Tsaile-Wheatfields), said.

Speaker Damon certified the resolution June 24 and President Jonathan Nez has until July 4 to sign it into law. If no action is taken, it becomes Navajo Nation law. Chapters then need to pass support resolutions accepting summer youth employment funds, a requirement to meet compliance policies for the OOC and OMB.

“The Navajo Nation Council supports our young people as they continue to grow to be the leaders we need tomorrow. I have always spoken about the seven generations and how our youth must return home to help their communities. Summer employment opportunities allow our students, whether in high school or college, to purchase school supplies, clothing, and any travel costs they may incur while returning to their campuses. The \$4 million is an investment in the educational journey of our students,” Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh) said.

Diné Customary Law is highlighted in Legislation No. 0066-22, which says that Navajo children

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must be provided with the education “to absorb wisdom, self-knowledge, and knowledge to empower them to make a living and participate in the growth of the Navajo Nation.”

The \$4 million allocations will be deposited following the 50/50 funding distribution formula. The appropriation will be divided equally among all chapters, with 50% being divided proportionally using a percentage equal to the number of registered voters in each chapter.

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