

Navajo Council approves equity advocate testimony

Written by gallupsun

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The 25th Navajo Nation Council's Naa'bik'íyáti' Committee approved Legislation No. 0044-24 on Feb. 22.

The legislation issues recommendations to the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Victims of Crime's Tribal Victims Services Set-Aside Formula Grant Program, calling for equitable distribution, funding streams dedicated to construction and renovation projects, an established Missing and Murdered Indigenous People coordinator, technical assistance resources, and funding for MMIP community-based awareness efforts.

The Office of Victims of Crime is seeking feedback from tribal leaders on four issues including options to optimize administration of TVSSA funding relating to the variation in the annual Tribal Set-Aside amount, enhancing the application process for the FY 2024 TVSSA Formula Grant Program, improving outcomes for projects that involve major renovations or construction, and strengthening MMIP services.

"The suggested equal distribution among all participating tribes disproportionately harms larger tribes like the Navajo Nation. The current formula does not adequately consider the unique challenges of rural, geographically isolated communities," Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley Tse'alnaozt'íí', Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gadiiahi/To'Koi) said.

Crotty is the legislation sponsor as well as Chairwoman of the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force.

She noted that OVC's award criteria should consider population, land base, and rurality of each tribe to ensure an equitable distribution of TVSSA resources, which is critical considering the 2024 reduction of TVSSA set-aside funding. Crotty's testimony addresses this issue by calling for stability in TVSSA set-aside funding.

In light of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples crisis, Crotty recommends an expansion of TVSSA's funding scope to include support services for families of MMIP and a dedicated MMIP coordinator within the TVSSA program. Her testimony recommends that the

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TVSSA provide technical assistance and capacity-building resources that specifically help tribes develop and implement policies for addressing MMIP cases.

“We need resources to support community-based efforts that raise awareness about the MMIP issues we face, which will contribute to preventing further tragedies,” she said.

Crotty reiterated the Navajo Nation’s commitment to working collaboratively with the OVC and Congress to address these pressing issues.

“The TVSSA funding is more than a financial resource. It’s a lifeline for victims of crime and their families,” she said. “We must make every effort to ensure that these funds are allocated in a way that honors our sacred trust obligations, respects the sovereignty of Tribal Nations, and provides justice and resources for healing our tribal victims.”

Legislation No. 0044-24 was approved unanimously with the Naabik’iyati’ Committee being the final authority. The deadline for submitting official written testimony to the U.S. DOJ-OVC is Feb. 28.

