

Navajo Nation Council recognizes all marriages with new legislation

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Window Rock, Ariz. — During the Navajo Nation Pride opening ceremony on June 23, Delegate Seth Damon (Baahaali, Chilchiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) signed and sponsored Legislation 0139-23, repealing Title 9 of the Navajo Nation Code so that same-sex marriages are recognized within the Navajo Nation.

In 2005, the 20th Navajo Nation Council enacted Resolution No. CJN-34-05, which prohibited same-sex marriages in Title 9 of the Navajo Nation Code.

“The prohibition against same-sex marriages does not uniformly welcome or support the well-being of all Diné,” Damon said. “The purpose of the legislation I’m sponsoring is to ensure that all Diné are welcome within the four sacred mountains and to recognize all marriages within the Navajo Nation.”

Legislation 0139-23 also amends other provisions within the Navajo Nation Code to conform with this repeal. Although the legislation repeals the prohibition against same-sex marriages in Title 9, the method for a traditional Navajo wedding ceremony involving a man and woman shall remain unchanged.

Keeping the traditional Navajo wedding the same will not prohibit nor deny same-sex marriages because there are other methods available to marry under Title 9.

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The Navajo Nation Council passed Resolution No. NABIS-50-19 supporting the U.S. Congress to enact SB 788, "Equality Act." The Equality Act will amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to expand the protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex in areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, public education, federal funding, credit, and the jury system.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council also passed Resolution No. CJY-63-20, which established Diné Pride Week to be held every third week in June to protect Navajo Nation citizens from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and marital status among other things.

"We feel it's in the best interest of the Navajo Nation to repeal Title 9 so that everyone can enjoy the full benefits of legal recognition of their marriages within the Navajo Nation, whether our relatives are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transgender, non-gender specific, two-spirit, or Nádleehí," Damon said.

Damon was joined at the signing ceremony by 24th Council Delegate Eugene Tso (Chinle) who had introduced a similar bill in 2022. Tso's bill was never heard as deadlines had forced Council's adjournment.

"We live with people we love. There should be no discussion about it when this legislation comes to the floor," Tso said. "Why would you debate it? This is who we are. We're Diné."

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