



Naat'ájí Nahat'á Hane'

Legislative Branch News

Fall 2012

22nd Navajo Nation Council
Office of the Speaker

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Speaker's Message

Again, I welcome you to our most recent effort within the Legislative Branch – Naat'áji Nahat'á Hane' (Legislative Branch News).

As I have previously stated, the purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview of regular session activities of the Council. The overall goal is to keep Diné citizens informed of their government.

Keeping in line with our efforts to communicate regularly and effectively, last week was the first time a council session was live-streamed (via USTREAM) for a global Diné audience.

I have consistently praised the 22nd Navajo Nation Council for its desire to move toward a transparent and accountable government.

Such are principles that will guide Diné governance to a participatory government rooted in the values of our people.

I thank the Diné people for their continued vigilance and I assure the Nation's citizenship that we are consistently working toward improved communication.

During the week of Fall Session, Council deliberated and voted on eleven legislations – two tabled, eight passed, and one failed.

Council adopted the Navajo Nation Title 2 Reform Act of 2012; appointed Tom Platero as the Director of Legislative Services and Elizabeth Begay as the Auditor General; and approved an emergency appropriation of \$625,426 to respond to Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever on the Nation.

Council works diligently to respond to the nation's needs. Your council delegates will continue to prove that we can expect nothing short of excellence.



First time live-streaming of Fall Navajo Council Session begins with event connecting families to veterans

For many Diné people, the arrival of fall and its bounty is looked upon with sizeable gratitude.

It is a time when crops are ripe for the harvest after many months of hard work; and it is also a time when families come back together, bundling up against cool temperatures to enjoy family time at the Nation's various fairs and community festivities.

And it was precisely with this seasonal focus on family and connectedness in mind that the 22nd Navajo Nation Council chose to honor and reach out to Navajo veterans serving overseas as a part of their kick-off initiative to celebrate a long-awaited achievement – the introduction of live web streaming of Council sessions for a global Diné audience.

To celebrate this remarkable turning point in the history of Diné government, Speaker Johnny Naize and staff coordinated the first ever “Navajo Nation Council and Diné Family Military Live-Stream Outreach” event on the morning of Oct. 15.

The event allowed families of deployed military men and women, along with council delegates, to express their sentiments utilizing the Council's new live-stream configuration.

Before a crowd of approximately 70 people, Speaker Naize greeted those in attendance, and gave special recognition to Navajo military personnel who were viewing the event from wherever they are stationed abroad.

“Thank you for joining us this morning as we recognize our veterans for their services to this great nation of ours, the United States of America. Across this great country and throughout the world, Navajo Americans will take time this morning to honor our brave fighting men and women,” Speaker Naize said in his opening remarks.

We recognize that all of our veterans have given something of themselves to this country, and some have given all, laying down their life to defend the freedom we hold dear.”

The pleasant sound of birds chirping in the trees around the Council Chambers lent tranquility to the atmosphere as Council Delegate Leonard Pete (Chinle) followed Speaker Naize’s opening remarks with a morning prayer.

A veteran of the military armed forces himself, Delegate Pete humbly asked for the protection and safe return of the courageous Navajo men and women fighting for the protection of their homeland and the greater United States.

“A lot of our Navajo people, men and women, are serving in numbers far greater than any ethnic groups. We know this, and that’s why we need to stand down here as the home front on this day and pray for them,” said Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs manager David Nez, thanking Delegate Pete for his powerful prayer.

Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) praised the new live streaming technology for improving communication between the

Navajo government, its people, and veterans overseas.



Veterans and those who are currently serving in the armed forces are never forgotten and are always remembered during Chapter meetings, said Delegate Begaye.

Offering sentiments fraught with motherly affection and caution, Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) reassured veterans that thoughts and prayers for their well-being were on the minds and lips of mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and relatives here on Diné Bikéyah.

Delegate Benally sent a special message to her niece, Staff Sgt. Regina James, who is stationed in Las Vegas, Nev. but is currently serving in Afghanistan as a member of the U.S. Air Force. “Take care of yourself, shiyazhí,” Delegate Benally said.

“My relatives and my precious children that are across the great waters, I salute you this morning,” said Council Delegate Nelson BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaille/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch’izhi). “And as I pray every morning, I remember each of you. I thank you so much from the deepest

part of my heart, where my mother is, where my homeland is – I salute you.”

Anthony Peterman, legislative staff assistant for the Office of the Speaker, joined his aunt, Winona Shirley, in sending their sentiments of love and luck to Staff Sgt. Iona Peterman, who has served in the U.S. Army for the past 9 years.

Shirley told the crowd her daughter rarely comes home and “hopes that she’ll come home soon in time for Christmas.” Staff Sgt. Peterman is currently serving in Afghanistan, and is a member of the Signal Corps.

As the live-streamed veterans tribute event drew to a close, the wind gently stirred the autumn-hued flowers resting against the podium, reminding those in attendance that it was on this same breeze path that the thoughts and prayers said that morning were being carried overseas.

“I know there are days you miss your home, you miss your loved ones, you miss your parents, you miss your land. You miss your birthplace,” said Delegate Pete, in closing. “We love you. We love you. We will continue to stand behind you, and will continue to pray for you.”

SPEAKER’S QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

When it comes to ensuring that Diné people are receiving health care that is responsive to our unique cultural and traditional values and beliefs, I must recognize the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee for taking time to travel to Utah on September 12. HEHSC dialogued with the staff from the Montezuma Creek Community Health Center to learn more about how the unique health care needs of Utah Navajos are being met.

At the urging of Council Delegate Kenneth Maryboy, the spotlight was placed on the innovative health care services that are being provided to our Navajo relatives living on the Utah Strip. Like Delegate Maryboy, I, too, realize that in this region of our Nation, there are many traditional Navajos who prefer to see a traditional medicinal practitioner for holistic healing. It is encouraging to know that in Utah, Navajo patients who qualify for specific medical benefit programs have the option to receive \$100 to put toward their payment for traditional healing ceremonies designed to address their health care needs.

Continuing on matters pertaining to health, it is this committee that has been active and involved in spreading awareness to the Nation concerning two very serious diseases that warrant the attention of the Navajo people: Rocky Mountain Spotted-Fever and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV.

I applaud the efforts of Council Delegate Jonathan Hale, HEHSC chair, in working with the Navajo Health Education Program to obtain additional funding needed to educate Navajo people about HIV and encourage them to get tested and know their status. HEHSC has also assisted the Foreign Animal Disease Task Force in getting information to the Navajo people on prevention of Rocky Mountain Spotted-Fever.



Tonalea Day School students work as pages for first day of Council Fall Session

For young Navajo students, visiting the Navajo Nation Council Chambers can be both a memorable and life-changing experience, especially when given the chance to be a council page for a day for the Nation's leaders.

Students that are selected to serve as pages for the Council perform a variety of duties from delivering legislative documents and messages to performing simple administrative tasks for delegates.

"Serving as a page on the Council floor presents a great opportunity for our young people to meet their Council Delegate and get directly involved with their Navajo government – both

of which are opportunities that I highly encourage our young minds to take," said Speaker Johnny Naize.

"It is a great pleasure to interact with our young people during council sessions," Speaker Naize adds. "I know that members of the Council enjoy having our Nation's students in the Chambers and showing them in real-time how laws are made, amended, and discussed at this level of government."

On the first day of the Council's Fall Session, eight students from Tonalea Day School in Tonalea, Ariz. arrived at the Navajo Nation capitol in time to witness the Council's morning

tribute to veterans and military personnel overseas.

The students, ranging from grades 4 through 8, were on hand to witness the first time the Council connected with a global Diné audience via live-streaming on the web, which will stand as an important milestone for years to come.

Linda Curley, student chaperone, said the visit was a valuable experience for the students, many of whom serve as leaders on their school's student body council.

"They were able to see their leaders at work, and that to accomplish anything there must be partnership and teamwork," said Curley, who added that seeing how the Council conducted the session proceedings was an asset for the students who will use that knowledge in their future monthly meetings.

Traveling to the Nation's capital for these students meant waking up extra early and leaving Tonalea at approximately 5:00 a.m., hours before the sun peaked over the eastern horizon.

For Tonalea Day School student government president, Kaycee Betoney, waking up extra early was worth it because "it was a good experience being on the council floor and watching our leaders in action," she remarked.

"I liked the fact that we were made to be responsible and that dressing professionally is important for conducting business," Betoney added.

The most interesting aspect of the experience for the students was seeing how the Council utilized technology to broadcast their legislative session online and allowed loved ones to use this format to send messages to their loved ones serving in the military.

It was "very progressive," remarked Curley.

Speaker Naize encourages students from other schools throughout the Navajo Nation to inquire with the legislative branch on the opportunity to serve as pages for a day during regular council sessions.



SPEAKER'S QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHT OF BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE

I commend the Budget and Finance Committee for successfully guiding the nation toward achieving a Navajo Nation Fiscal Year 2013 Comprehensive Budget. From the very outset, the odds were against us because of the short timeframe, particularly as it related to the requirement that all programs, divisions, and branches produce a 5-year strategic plan for FY 2013 that would aggregate to an overall Navajo Nation strategic plan.

Moreover, the unforeseeable problems—such as the unexpected knowledge that the Four Corners Power Plant would shut down a year early, thereby reducing the Nation's revenue projections significantly—curtailed what progress was being made with the budget process. Although this shift in attention caused considerable delay, I believe what ensued, including diligent study and critical analysis, proved to be very useful in efficiently vetting both a possible continuing resolution and comprehensive budget.

It is incumbent upon each of us to examine how the law assists the public and guides the elected leadership in order to achieve the best outcome for the health and welfare of the people. Based on such examinations, it is the responsibility of the leadership to exercise reasonable judgment and action. Given the unique challenges that were before Council, I assert that the actions relating to the three waivers approved by Council were necessary in order to achieve a comprehensive budget.

SPEAKER'S QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHT OF LAW & ORDER COMMITTEE

The Law and Order Committee has worked tirelessly and consistently to increase the presence of law enforcement officers in Navajo communities through the establishment of cross-commissions agreements with several county law enforcement agencies in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. I realize that often times, it can be difficult to coordinate meetings with multiple entities, so I appreciate the diligence with which this committee is staying on top of the correspondence to ensure that dialogue and progress on finalization of these agreements do not stall.

On September 19, the committee hosted a productive information exchange meeting with Law and Order Committee representatives from the Oglala Sioux Tribe, who traveled from their homelands in South Dakota. This was the delegation's second visit with our Navajo Law and Order Committee. I take great pride in knowing that our Nation is in a position to help other tribal nations develop and improve their systems for public safety, law enforcement, and judicial tribal courts. I applaud them for working to strengthen public safety and law enforcement entities across Indian Country.

Lastly, it is encouraging to note the suggestions that this committee has provided to the Ethics and Rules Office to ensure that elections candidates are informed through workshops of the ethics rules and requirements they are held to when serving in elected positions.

Navajo Nation Sales Tax Redistribution Act of 2012 passed by Navajo Nation Council, does not increase tax

During last week's council session, Council passed the Navajo Nation Sales Tax Redistribution Act of 2012 with a vote of 9 supporting and 7 opposing.

Prior to the passage of the act, 75% of the collected revenue was deposited into the General Fund of the Navajo Nation, and 25% was deposited into the Judicial/Public Safety Facilities Fund pursuant to 24 N.N.C. § 620 (B) and (C).

Pending the president's signature, the collected revenues will be distributed as follows: 60% to the General Fund of the Navajo Nation, 20% for the Judicial/Public Safety Facilities Fund, 10% for the Scholarship Fund, and 10% for the Economic Development Fund.

The change in distribution of taxes will provide more scholarship funds for the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance, which has previously reported to Council the deficiency in funding that leaves a large number of students unfunded.

"I look forward to when I can attend graduations and know we can support more of our students seeking post secondary education to improve the quality of life for them individually, their family and extended

family," said Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill).

The act only redefines how the collected taxes are distributed and does not increase the tax. Tax increases are a function of the Tax Commission.

24 N.N.C. § 605 (A) states, "The tax imposed by this Chapter is imposed at a rate of not less than two percent (2%), nor more than six percent (6%), which shall be specifically established by regulations promulgated by the Navajo Tax Commission."

If the Navajo Tax Commission approves increasing the tax by an additional cent, it will be implemented on January 1, 2013.

"I look forward to the day two years from now when our revenue grows because of a number of new businesses created across Navajo," Delegate Witherspoon stated.

Delegate Witherspoon thanked President Ben Shelly, Vice President Rex Lee Jim, and Navajo Nation employees for their support in the initiative.

He also expressed his appreciation to council delegates who voted in support of the legislation.

2012 Fall Session Legislation Results

22nd Navajo Nation Council

Legislation	Committee Assignment					
	Budget and Finance	Health and Education and Human Services	Law & Order	Resources and Development	Naa'bi'iyati'	Navajo Nation Council
Legislation No. 0126-12, sponsored by Council Delegates Leonard Tsosie, Jonathan Nez, Jonathan L. Hale, and Dwight Witherspoon, adopts the "Navajo Nation Title 2 Reform Act of 2012."¹ Action: Council passed the legislation with sixteen (16) supporting and zero (0) opposing.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislation No. 0127-12, sponsored by Council Delegates Jonathan L. Hale and Walter Phelps, would amend 2 N.C.C §873 (B) and 11 N.N.C. §2, 11, 321, which authorizes the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors to Develop and Approve School Board Apportionment Plans. Action: Council tabled the legislation with fourteen (14) supporting and six (6) opposing.		✓	✓		✓	✓
Legislation No. 0513-11, sponsored by Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon, amends 24 N.N.C §620 (B)(C) by enacting the "Navajo Nation Sales Tax Distribution Reform Act of 2012" by allocating 10% of the revenue collect to the Scholarship Fund and 10% to the Economic Development Fund. Action: Council passed the legislation with nine (9) supporting and seven (7) opposing.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislation No. 0265-12, sponsored by Council Delegate Russell Begaye, would have appointed Regina Holyan as probationary Associate Justice of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. Action: Council voted down the legislation with eight (8) supporting and nine (9) opposing.			✓		✓	✓

¹ In order to pass, this legislation required a 2/3 vote of the entire Navajo Nation Council.

Legislation

	Budget and Finance	Health and Education and Human Services	Law & Order	Resources and Development	Naa'biik'iyati'	Navajo Nation Council
Legislation NO. 0312-12, sponsored by Council Delegates Charles Damon, II, George Apachito, and Danny Simpson, approves and requests the United States to enact legislation to take into trust status Navajo lands in the Eastern Navajo Agency; convey or re-convey lands to the Navajo Nation in trust status; confirm the trust status of lands purchased by the United States under legislation intended by Congress to be held in trust for the Navajo Nation; preserve all valid existing rights; authorize the conveyance of Navajo Nation interests in certain lands of extraordinary archaeological significance to the United States to consolidate such lands in Federal ownership; to obtain the necessary funds and authority from the United States so that the Navajo Nation will have the sole authority for future construction maintenance and rehabilitation of the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project. Action: The Council passed the legislation with fourteen (14) supporting and one (1) opposing.		✓			✓	✓
Legislation No. 0365-12, sponsored by Council Delegate Jonathan L. Hale, authorizes the donation of four surplus Navajo Transit System buses. Action: The Council passed the legislation with fourteen (14) supporting and zero (0) opposing.			✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislation No. 0401-12, sponsored by Council Delegates Danny Simpson and Charles Damon, II, would have approved supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of \$122,000 for the Church Rock Incubator Center and Training Facilities. Action: The Council tabled the legislation with ten (10) supporting and nine (9) opposing.			✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislation No. 0418-12, sponsored by Speaker Johnny Naize, approves the appointment of Tom Platero pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §953 as director of the Office of Legislative Services. Action: Council passed the legislation with twelve (12) supporting and nine (9) opposing.					✓	✓

Legislation

	Budget and Finance	Health and Education and Human Services	Law & Order	Resources and Development	Naa'biik'iyati'	Navajo Nation Council
Legislation No. 0428-12, sponsored by Speaker Johnny Naize and Council Delegate LoRenzo C. Bates, confirms the appointment of Elizabeth Begay as Auditor General of the Navajo Nation pursuant to 12 N.N.C. §3 (B). Action: The Council passed the legislation with twenty-one (21) supporting and zero (0) opposing.	✓				✓	✓
Legislation 0429-12, sponsored by Speaker Johnny Naize and Council Delegate LoRenzo C. Bates, approves supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of \$750,000 to the Legislative Branch in business unit No. 101015 for the performance of a comprehensive investment analysis regarding potential investments by the Navajo Nation. Action: The Council passed legislation with sixteen (16) supporting and zero (0) opposing.	✓				✓	✓
Legislation 0446-12, sponsored by Council Delegates Walter Phelps and Kenneth Maryboy, (emergency legislation) approves supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of \$405,317 to the Division of Natural Resources, Navajo Veterinary and Livestock Program and \$220,109 to the Fish and Wildlife for the public health of the people of the Navajo Nation by responding promptly to the circulation of the Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever on the Navajo Nation as evidenced in report of the Centers for Disease Control. Action: The Council passed the legislation with eighteen (18) supporting and zero (0) opposing.						✓
KEY	✓ - Considered ✓ - Final Approval Authority					

2012 Fall Session Voting Tallies

22nd Navajo Nation Council	Legislation 0126-12	Legislation 0127-12	Legislation 0513-12	Legislation 0265-12	Legislation 0312-12	Legislation 0365-12	Legislation 0401-12	Legislation 0418-12	Legislation 0428-12	Legislation 0429-12	Legislation 0446-12
Apachito, George	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	----	✓	✓	----	✓
Bates, LoRenzo	✓	E	E	E	E	E	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Begay, Elmer	----	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Begay, Mel	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	----	E	E	E	E
BeGaye, Nelson	✓	X	E	E	E	E	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Begaye, Russell	✓	X	X	✓+	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Benally, Katherine	E	✓	✓	X	X	----	X	X	✓	✓	----
Butler, Joshua	E	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	----	✓
Curley, Lorenzo	E	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	----	----
Damon, Charles	E	✓	X	✓	✓+	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
Hale, Jonathan	----	✓+	E	X	✓	✓+	X	✓	----	----	----
Maryboy, Kenneth	✓	✓	X	X	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Naize, Johnny	S	S	S	SX	S	S	S✓	✓	✓+	✓+	✓
Nez, Jonathan	✓	✓	X	E	E	E	E	✓	✓	E	E
Pete, Leonard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Phelps, Walter	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓+
Shepherd, Alton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Simpson, Danny	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	-- +	X	✓	✓	✓
Smith, Roscoe	✓	✓	E	E	E	E	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tom, David	E	E	E	E	E	E	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tsinigine, Duane	✓	✓	E	E	E	E	X	S✓	✓	✓	✓
Tsosie, Leonard	✓+	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓
Witherspoon, Dwight	✓	✓	✓+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yazzie, Edmund	✓	E	E	E	E	----	✓	✓	✓	E	✓
Yea	16	14	9	8	14	14	10	12	21	16	18
Nay	0	6	7	9	1	0	9	9	0	0	0
Did Not Vote	8	4	8	7	9	10	5	3	3	8	6
	Passed	Tabled	Passed	Failed	Passed	Passed	Tabled	Passed	Passed	Passed	Passed
KEY	✓ Support = +1 X Oppose = -1 ---- Did Not Vote = 0 + Primary Sponsor E = Officially Excused / 0 S = Speaker or Pro-Tem, No Voting Privileges (Only to break a tie)										

Council honors Lorena Williams and the late Paul Williams, Sr. for protecting Diné sovereignty

On opening day of the Fall Council Session on Oct. 15, the 22nd Navajo Nation Council reserved time to honor the valiant efforts of a 102 year-old Navajo matriarch and her late husband, both instrumental figures in a landmark 1959 U.S. Supreme Court decision affirming Indian jurisdiction over internal affairs within their reservation.

“Today, we honor and recognize from the Navajo Nation, the leadership of Paul, Sr. and Lorena Williams and the Steamboat Community in protecting Diné sovereignty in the case of Williams v. Lee,” stated Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichii, Steamboat) to the full Council.

For most sitting in the Council Chamber gallery, it was a bit difficult to gain a clear glimpse of Lorena Williams – the centenarian was seated in her wheelchair at the front of the Council floor, her hands clasped loosely upon her lap.

Nearly 60 years ago, this courageous Diné woman and her husband, Paul Williams, Sr., challenged a case that was brought against them by a Ganado Trading Post proprietor in the Superior Court of Arizona.

The Williams argued to have the case dismissed on the basis that the Navajo tribal court had jurisdiction over the matter, not the state court.

The case, which began in 1953, eventually worked its way up to the highest court in the nation – the U.S. Supreme Court.



On January 12, 1959, the high court ruled that Navajo Nation courts have exclusive jurisdiction over a civil dispute arising on Navajo land between a Non-Indian and members of the Navajo Nation.

“This legal principle remains as the defining rule of law in the legal and political relationships among the Navajo Nation, the United States government, and several states of the Union,” said Delegate Shepherd, reading a paragraph from a

Steamboat Chapter resolution recently passed on Oct. 3.

“This rule of law would not have been affirmed but for the personal efforts of Paul and Lorena Williams and the community of Steamboat. The extraordinary courage, persistence, and resilience needed to confront overwhelming efforts to extinguish our right to freedom to exist as Diné should not be forgotten,” Delegate Shepherd added.



Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) presented a plaque on behalf of the Council to Lorena Williams, reading the plaque's inscription aloud to the audience.

“The 22nd NNC recognizes Lorena Williams for her dedication and perseverance in fighting to assert our nation's sovereignty in the Williams vs. Lee 1959 case, in which it was held that Arizona courts were not free to exercise jurisdiction over civil suit by one whom is not an Indian against an Indian where causes of action arises on an Indian reservation,” Speaker Naize recited from the plaque.

Williams also received a Navajo Nation flag from President Ben Shelly for “great appreciation” on behalf of the Nation and the Navajo people.

Vice-President Rex Lee Jim presented a plaque recognizing the late Paul Williams, Sr. to namesake, Paul Jr., who stood alongside his mother during her moment of recognition.

“Thank you for honoring my mom,” said Paul Williams' Jr., addressing the Council, Speaker Naize, and the Navajo president and vice-president.

Paul Jr. expressed that his family did not have the opportunity to honor his father, lamenting that “we always wait until they're gone” to honor the extraordinary contributions people make in their lives.

Pointing to a badge resting against his chest, Paul Jr. stated, “My father was a Navajo councilman for 19 years. He had a big heart for people. He let people come first – and him, last.”

Recalling how Paul Williams, Sr. reacted to the news that he and his wife had won their case, son-in-law Jefferson Lee said Paul Sr.

stated that he didn't have anything to say. He simply dropped his head and cried.

Lee attested to the determination that welled within the spirits of both Lorena and Paul Williams, Sr., that despite years of hardship the family endured while their case was considered by various courts, "they never gave up," he said.

When Lorena Williams was given the microphone to speak, the sturdiness of her voice proved she still possessed a spirit of determination.

"My relatives, my people, my grandchildren, I want to express to you all my appreciation for this honor," she said.

Brief, but to the point.

Delegate Shepherd, who had stated earlier in the recognition ceremony that it was only appropriate to honor Lorena Williams while she was still alive and in the presence of the Navajo people, said, "It is inspiring to see where our people have come from and how true and strong they have stood for us in years past.

As we move forward, we look to the next generation – two to three generations down the road from where I stand – and with that, I feel very privileged to have this time on the floor to give special recognition to Lorena Williams."

SPEAKER'S HIGHLIGHT OF RESOURCES & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

I would like to express admiration for my honorable colleagues from the Resources and Development Committee, who have gone to considerable lengths over these past few months to create public forums in which Diné citizens were able to freely and openly express their thoughts and concerns on important matters that impact the nation's natural resources, environment, and economic development.

In July, this committee held a public meeting in which over 300 Dine people from across the Nation convened at the Fire Rock Casino for three days to dialogue and develop solutions to address the dire problem our Nation faces with high numbers of feral livestock and the devastation it has caused to our land.

Most recently, the committee organized a very successful Nation Building Summit from August 21-24 in coordination with Dine College at its main campus in Tsaile where, again, over 300 people arrived daily to speak from their perspectives on a multitude of issues tied to infrastructure development on our great Nation.

It is these types of inclusive grassroots level discussions that lay down a fortified framework for the prosperous and responsible development of our nation. I have stated repeatedly that the Navajo people should be in the driver seat as far as deciding how our nation will develop. While the topic of the use of a percentage of the principal from the Permanent Trust Fund is a controversial one, the discussion must be had with the Diné people. It is their money and it is their decision to make as to how it should be used.

Legislative Branch ‘pink day’ for breast cancer awareness

When visitors and leaders walked into the Council Chambers on the third day of the Fall Council Session, they noticed one color dominated the interior more than any other – pink.

At the urging of Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), council delegates and members of the Navajo Nation Legislative Branch wore pink on Oct. 17 to raise awareness of breast cancer.

“October is designated as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and as such is dedicated to raising awareness and educating individuals about breast cancer,” Speaker Naize said.

Speaker Naize strongly believed that the Nation’s leaders and legislative branch staff had a responsibility to participate in raising awareness among our people.

Council delegates donned dress shirts in various shades of pink while others decided to wear pink patterned ties. Moving throughout the Council Chambers, female staff members of the legislative branch stood out in full traditional Navajo dresses flushed in hues of blush.

Every now and again, people walking by the front platform of the Council Chambers would stir the air surrounding pink balloons secured to its panels.

“Although this effort may seem minimal, it is the start of what I hope will be an annual legislative branch push to create greater awareness among Diné citizens,” Speaker Naize said.

Among Navajo people, cancer is the third leading cause of death, right behind accidents/injuries and heart disease. Breast cancer is the leading type of cancer diagnosed on the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts’ah Bii Kin), vice-chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee, believes that generating

awareness at the Navajo Nation Council level has valuable impact.

“I think increasing awareness at this level of government raises

recognition to another level because now it brings attention to laws that need to be made or amended at the legislative level,” said Delegate Nez, who was speaking on laws that will ultimately amplify protection of the health of the Navajo people.

“I believe it is really imperative that we bring awareness to this event because we are talking about our women nation, about where we come from,” said Council Delegate Nelson BeGaye. “We need to take care of our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and spouses.”

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