



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation Council votes to extend timeline for the Transportation Stimulus Plan referendum

WINDOW ROCK – During the fourth and final day of the Winter Council Session, members of the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0005-17, which would amend the Transportation Stimulus Plan referendum measure by extending the deadline to hold a special election to allow registered Navajo voters to decide whether or not to use approximately \$216 million from the Permanent Trust Fund principle for road improvements throughout the Navajo Nation.

The Council approved the referendum measure on Oct. 27, which became law after President Russell Begaye did not take action within the 10-calendar day timeframe, in accordance with Navajo Nation law.

On Thursday, legislation sponsor Council Delegate Lee Jack, Sr. (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone) explained that the extension is necessary to allow additional time to secure funding for the Navajo Election Administration to hold the special election.

In September, the Council approved funding to hold the referendum, which was included in the Comprehensive Budget, and again in November when the Council amended the Comprehensive Budget – on both occasions, President Begaye used the presidential line item authority to deny the funds.

Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii), who sponsored the referendum legislation in October, urged the Council to approve the extension to provide a “legislative fix” in regards to the mandated timeline associated with all referendum measures.

The Navajo Election Code requires referendums to be held no sooner than 60 days and no later than 90 days following the passage of the resolution referring the enactment. The new language approved by the Council would postpone the referendum election until funds for the election are secured. If funds are secured, the election would be held no sooner than 60 days and no later than 90 days of the approval of funds.

The Council voted 13-3 on Thursday to approved Legislation No. 0005-17, which will be sent to the Office of the President and Vice President for consideration.

The Council also considered separate legislation that seeks to secure funding from the Navajo Nation's Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of \$248,000 for the Navajo Election Administration to conduct the referendum election.

Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) raised questions and concerns over certain amounts contained in the budget forms attached to the legislation specifically pertaining to standard mileage rate that changed with the start of the new year, and requested that revised forms be included to reflect the new rate.

The Council on Thursday voted 15-1 to table Legislation No. 0431-16 until the next session.

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