



25th Navajo Nation Council

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Law and Order Committee receives FY2025 budget update from the Office of Hearings and Appeals**



### **LOC receiving report from Richie Nez, Director, Office of Hearing and Appeals**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Monday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council’s Law and Order Committee (LOC) received a report regarding the upcoming FY2025 budget from the Navajo Nation Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA), during their regular meeting at the Law & Order Committee Building Conference Room.

OHA Director Richie Nez’s updates focused on previous conditions of appropriations and legislative concerns, as well as the office’s plan of operation, and policy and procedures.

“Modernizing our procedures and ensuring comprehensive legislative records are vital for the efficiency and transparency of our legal system. This meeting will set the stage for significant improvements in how we handle our legislative history and employee vetting processes,” said LOC Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock).

Nez’s report also highlighted advancements in document scanning and storage technology, emphasizing the need for comprehensive legislative history and the classification of employees. The report also noted the implementation of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) capabilities and potential partnerships with universities aimed at revolutionizing the management of legal documents, making them more accessible and organized.

“Legislative history is nearly non-existent here, but it’s crucial for interpreting our laws accurately and ensuring our legal framework reflects our community’s needs,” added Chair Charles-Newton.

The committee also addressed budget considerations, including a potential \$9 million shortfall for the next fiscal year that is set to begin on Oct. 1.

“We must begin scanning and storing materials to prevent future losses like the water damage incident that destroyed critical documents,” added Nez. “Partnering with universities for document storage is a strategic move, ensuring our legal documents are both preserved and accessible.”

LOC Vice Chair, and Council Delegate Cheryl Yazzie (Dilcon, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone, Greasewood Springs), said that updating Navajo Nation laws and procedures is essential for progress.

“The discussions we had regarding legislative history and employee classifications are critical to ensuring that our governance reflects the needs and realities of our people,” Vice Chair Yazzie said.

The LOC also reviewed action items including scheduling public hearings for all probationary judges and addressing the need for background investigations for tribal employees. The evaluation hearing for probationary Judge Letitia Stover was tabled for further discussion.

The committee also voted in support of Legislation No. 0106-24, an action recognizing Navajo Nation Council Delegate membership on the Tribal-Interior Budget Council and establishing a process for selecting an alternate tribal representative.

According to the legislation, sponsored by Chair Charles-Newton, the purpose is to streamline the representation process and ensure effective advocacy for the Navajo Nation at the federal level. The legislation now moves forward for further consideration by the Naabik’iyati Committee.

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