



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Former Human Resources Division Director delivers exit report to the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee



Former Director of Human Resources Debbie Nez-Manuel (right) presented an exit report to the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, former Division Director of Human Resources Debbie Nez-Manuel presented a comprehensive exit report to the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC), regarding her recent termination of employment by the Office of the President and Vice President.

HEHSC Chair Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kinlichee, Steamboat) voiced his disapproval for how the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) handled Nez-Manuel's termination and raised particular concern with the constant turnover in personnel within the Administration.

"You were criticized, rejected, misunderstood, but I believe we lost a valuable, knowledgeable, experienced, educated person. This goes for all the others who left before you," Chair James said, while commending Nez-Manuel for her dedication and valuable contributions.

Council Delegate Germaine Simonson (Hard Rock, Forest Lake, Pinon, Black Mesa, Whippoorwill) echoed similar sentiments, expressing disbelief at the treatment Nez-Manuel received and commending her integrity.

Nez-Manuel expressed confusion and surprise at the termination of her employment.

According to her report, Nez-Manuel assisted numerous offices and departments, including the Department of Personnel Management, Office of Background Investigation, Office of Labor Relation, Vital Records, Retirement, Navajo Nation TV and Film, Workforce Development, Office of Child Support, and NOSHA.

Nez-Manuel highlighted significant initiatives she had spearheaded, such as software system upgrades and comprehensive salary increases. She emphasized the importance of collaboration across multiple departments to accomplish these goals. "We knew that we couldn't accomplish this in isolation. We needed to collaborate with multiple departments and communications was key," she said.

She stressed the critical nature of ongoing projects, particularly those related to the financial system and comprehensive study. "There shouldn't be anything holding up these projects from completion," she added, noting the challenges of working in an unpredictable environment.

Nez-Manuel also addressed the workforce program, which impacts thousands of individuals annually. She emphasized the importance of regular meetings and dedication to accommodate the pressure of serving the 110 communities on the Navajo Nation.

She also outlined concerns about the increasing number of grievances and complaints related to retirement payouts, attributing interruptions of the process to the continuous reassignment of attorneys in the Navajo Nation Department of Justice (DOJ).

She concluded her report by expressing gratitude for the committee's support and reaffirming her commitment to serving her people in the future.

"The fundamental teachings I was raised with allowed me to bring integrity to the workplace. The ethics required of the position of HR director were grounded in the teachings of my elders," Nez-Manuel stated.

The HEHSC also met in executive session to receive additional reports regarding personnel issues and other sensitive matters from Nez-Manuel, based on her time as the Division Director.

The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee approved Nez-Manuel's exit report with a vote of four in favor and none opposed.

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