



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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## **25th Navajo Nation Council approves Legislation 0149-24 establishing Environmental Remediation Fund**



**Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez, sponsor of the Legislation 0149-24, and his presenters, Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency Executive Director Stephen Etsitty and Navajo Nation Controller Sean McCabe, CPA.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.**– The 25th Navajo Nation Council has passed Legislation 0149-24, with 10 in favor and 3 opposed, establishing the “Navajo Nation Environmental Remediation Fund.” This historic measure aims to provide sustained financial support for cleaning up contaminated sites across the Navajo Nation, prioritizing public health and environmental restoration. Beginning in fiscal year 2026, the fund will receive an annual 2% set-aside from the General Fund to ensure consistent remediation efforts.

The legislation, introduced by Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez, addresses urgent contamination issues that have long affected Navajo communities. “This fund is a critical step toward restoring our land and safeguarding our people’s health,” said Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez. “For too long, contamination has posed severe health risks to our communities. Establishing this fund ensures that we have the resources necessary to protect our lands and water sources for future generations.”

The Navajo Nation Environmental Remediation Fund was created in response to significant contamination at sites such as the Navajo Forest Products Industry (NFPI) in Sawmill, Ariz., and other areas impacted by legacy industrial activities. Cleanup costs across the Navajo Nation are projected to range from \$250 million to \$500 million, making a consistent funding source essential. The fund is expected to generate \$4 million to \$5 million annually, based on actual General Fund revenues.

The fund will be managed by the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA), which will oversee site assessments, remediation planning, and project execution. The legislation also allows for supplementary funding through federal, state, and private grants.

The legislation received strong support from Council Delegates, who emphasized the need for proactive remediation to address health risks such as increased rates of cancer and other diseases linked to toxic exposure. Council Delegate Vince R. James stated, "We can no longer wait for outside help. This legislation allows us to take direct action, demonstrating our commitment to protect our people and the land."

Despite the broad support, some delegates raised concerns about the potential budgetary impact of the 2% set-aside, particularly on other vital services such as community programs and veterans' services. An amendment was introduced to delay the implementation to FY 2026, providing time for budget adjustments and allowing for the pursuit of external funding to reduce pressure on the General Fund.

The final vote on Legislation 0149-24 was 10 in favor, and 3 opposed, reflecting strong commitment from the Council to address long-standing environmental issues. Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty emphasized the urgency of the initiative, "This fund ensures we have a sustainable approach to cleaning up contamination, improving public health, and securing a healthier future for our communities."

The NNEPA will develop a comprehensive management plan for the fund, prioritizing contaminated sites based on the severity of contamination and risks to public health. Annual reports will be submitted to the Navajo Nation Council to ensure transparency and accountability.

"The establishment of this fund is just the beginning," Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez concluded. "We will continue to push for more resources and stronger partnerships to ensure the full remediation of all contaminated sites on Navajo lands."

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