



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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## **Budget and Finance Committee advanced key legislation for vital records services and judicial infrastructure**



**Budget and Finance Committee discuss Legislation 0263-24 pertaining to a contract with the U.S. Department of Interior.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — The 25th Navajo Nation Council’s Budget and Finance Committee (BFC) deliberated and voted unanimously to approve Legislation No. 0256-24, which renewed a critical federal contract for the Office of Vital Records, and Legislation No. 0259-24, which authorized \$34.25 million for essential judicial infrastructure projects across the Navajo Nation.

Sponsored by Council Delegate Vince R. James and co-sponsored by Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez and Council Delegate Lester C. Yazzie, Legislation No. 0256-24 renewed the Navajo Nation’s Public Law 93-638 contract with the U.S. Department of Interior. This renewal, effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2027, secured funding for the Office of Vital Records under the Division of Human Resources.

The Office of Vital Records played a pivotal role in maintaining essential documents such as tribal identification cards, Certificates of Indian Blood (CIB), and enrollment records. These services were critical for federal program eligibility, court proceedings, and international travel compliance.

Vice Chair Carl Slater underscored the importance of modernizing the program to meet current demands. “Our people deserve reliable, efficient systems that reflect the strength and sovereignty of our Nation. Renewing this contract was essential to ensuring families had access to the records that matter most while streamlining services for future generations.”

Program Manager Ron Duncan emphasized the program's funding challenges, noting that its annual \$1 million allocation had remained stagnant for years. The Committee discussed solutions, including exploring revenue opportunities through enhanced tribal identification systems.

The legislation passed with 3 in favor and none oppose, the legislation will proceed to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee for final approval.

Legislation No. 0259-24, sponsored by Honorable Eugenia Charles-Newton and co-sponsored by Honorable Shaandiin Parrish, allocated \$34,250,516 from the Hashkééjí Nahat'á Béeso Bá Hooghan Fund to address significant infrastructure needs within the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch. This funding supported six vital projects aimed at enhancing access to justice, improving operational efficiency, and modernizing outdated facilities.

The approved projects include several initiatives aimed at improving the judicial infrastructure. These projects are: an \$8.47 million investment for a 7,500-square-foot court facility in the Aneth Judicial District; \$74,459 for a mobile court unit to serve remote communities in Kayenta; \$1.54 million for a centralized warehouse for records management at the Administrative Offices of the Courts; and \$1 million allocated for the architectural design of a new judicial complex in the Ramah Judicial District. Additionally, \$159,550 will fund essential training for court clerks and staff through the Kayenta Training Program, and \$23 million is dedicated to the construction of a new Peacemaking Program Building, which will blend traditional hogans with modern infrastructure.

"It may have taken 3 years to develop an expenditure plan, but we were glad to see the first phase of the judicial branch's plan, to improve services across the Navajo Nation." Said Chair Parrish, the co-sponsor of the legislation, "I look forward to working with the Law and Order Committee to see what the rest of the funds could be used for to refine public safety on the Navajo Nation."

The Budget and Finance Committee emphasized the need for continued progress to address aging infrastructure and growing community demands. BFC voted in 3 favor and none oppose of this legislation and will advance to the Law and Order Committee for further deliberation.

Vice Chair Carl Slater expressed gratitude for the collaborative efforts of program leaders, judicial staff, and fellow delegates. "Our work today prioritized solutions that benefit our people. These investments were about ensuring stronger governance, greater accessibility, and the resources our communities need to thrive."

The next Budget and Finance Committee meeting was scheduled for January 7, 2025.

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