



## Veterans Administration continuing budget considered by HEHSC as delegates press for a comprehensive budget proposal

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**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Funding support for the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration (NNVA) that includes emergency assistance, one-time home improvement assistance and other direct services for Navajo veterans is under consideration by the Navajo Nation Council. Legislation No. 0048-21 proposes giving the NNVA additional time to present a comprehensive budget to the Council for approval by authorizing an extension of current funding amounts.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahat'a Dziil, Tsé Si'áni, Wide Ruins) said, once the Council approves the extension, the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) can sign the funding into law for the next quarter beginning Apr. 1.

The continuing budget is necessary because an updated comprehensive budget for the NNVA has not been made available to the Navajo Nation Council by the Executive Branch. Delegates have continued to press for a comprehensive budget that would fund the NNVA for the entire fiscal year since the Navajo Nation's overall budget was approved in November 2020.

Since funding for the NNVA under the 2021 budget is set to expire March 31st, Smith said the legislation gives the NNVA additional time to produce an acceptable budget. The Council originally approved a budget extension until the comprehensive budget was presented and approved, but that policy language was line item vetoed in Resolution No. CN-88-20.

As the program's oversight, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee expressed ongoing concerns with the NNVA at its Mar. 24 meeting. The committee voted in favor of the legislation, noting its members will present further discussion at the Naabik'iyáti' Committee.

On Tuesday, Navajo Nation agency commanders also advocated for a comprehensive budget that funds the NNVA through September. Smith explained the Council is able to do that when it receives the proposed budget and is made available to a delegate to sponsor in legislation.

Without a proposed comprehensive budget for the NNVA that maintains or increases funding for the five Navajo Nation agencies in charge of administering local assistance to Navajo veterans, the Council will consider the continuation of the current budget as a temporary measure.

Legislation No. 0048-21, sponsored by Smith and cosponsored by Council Delegate Pernell Halona (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'áá), will be heard next by the Budget and Finance Committee and then the Naabik'iyáti' Committee. The full Navajo Nation Council will have final authority for the legislation. If approved by the Council, it will be forwarded to the Navajo Nation President for enactment or veto.

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