



## Chapter Official's Stipend Shortfalls a Concern for Navajo Nation Council

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** September 3, 2021

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Monday, the Budget and Finance Committee (BFC) and Resources and Development Committee (RDC) of the 24th Navajo Nation Council (NNC) held a leadership meeting with the Division of Community Development (DCD) to discuss how the Chapter Official's stipend shortfall could be resolved.

"We need to address the areas of DCD budgets and process as legislative concerns in order to ensure that it gets addressed," said RDC Member Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain) "There needs to be some sort of supervision for this process."

Last month, RDC held their oversight budget hearing with the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) to discuss the unmet needs for various divisions and programs. The result of the hearing led to the discovery of the Chapters of the Navajo Nation experiencing a shortfall for the second consecutive fiscal year.

The Chapter Officials' stipends are funded for twenty-four meetings per fiscal year. The budget shortfall is occurring because other regularly scheduled meetings, such as agency and district meetings are left unfunded.

Following the Chapter Stipend Process, each Chapter allocates funding to the Chapter President, Vice-President, and Secretary/Treasurer for twelve planning and twelve regular meetings for each official position.

The shortfall causes a significant concern with BFC because the 2022 Fiscal Year is quickly approaching, which will begin in October of this year.

The Navajo Nation equally distributes fifty percent of the allocated funds every fiscal year to the 110 Chapters. The remaining fifty percent follows a 50/50 formula that is based on the number of registered voters at each Chapter.

RDC Member Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint) calls for equal distribution of funding for Chapter stipends and fiscal year allocations, "Rural Chapters are the ones always left out for 50/50 formulas and line items such as Chapter stipends and scholarships."

Chapters utilize the General Fund Budget and the Non-Administrative Cost Budget, but some Chapters use the stipends and allocate to personnel and fixed costs because they do not have an adequate budget to cover those costs.

“We should look at having these stipends apart of the fixed costs for chapter budgets before the allocations are done by the three branch agreements,” stated BFC Chairman Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee). “The direct funding should stay the same—not decreased or increased—a great deal of the direct services will have more funding.”

Members of the NNC questioned Dr. Pearl Yellowman, Executive Director of DCD, on why the budget shortfall is occurring and how could the issue be resolved. Yellowman stressed that smaller chapters are being impacted by voter registration and the base number of twenty-four meetings per Chapter needs to be addressed.

The NNC currently is addressing the stipend shortfall through Legislation No. 0182-21. BFC identified supplemental funding for Northern, Eastern, and Ft. Defiance Agencies. NNC will continue to look for supplemental funding to meet the Western and Chinle Agency shortfalls.

BFC Member Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé’ahnáoozt’íí, Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gad’ii’áhí/Tó Ko’i) encourages Agency Councils and Chapters to submit supporting resolutions to the legislation to advocate for full funding in the Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget and support supplemental funding to address the chronic shortfalls which destabilize local governance budgets.

A few recommendations were made by Navajo Nation Department of Justice to amend the Non-Administrative Costs to the Chapters’ budgets. RDC and BFC will address the DCD budgets through a work session and encourage written recommendations from all Agency Councils.

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