

Committee approved meth, suicide and domestic violence prevention initiatives

Written by Staff Report
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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Members of the Naabik'iyátí' Committee last Thursday, unanimously approved three separate legislations supporting grant applications submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that would fund methamphetamine, suicide, and domestic violence prevention initiatives on the Navajo Nation for a five-year cycle.

Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) sponsored Legislation No. 0312-15, supporting the Winslow Indian Health Care Center's grant application through Indian Health Services for approximately \$175,000.

Although the center is located a few miles off of the Navajo Nation, it is designated as a tribal organization for the purpose of managing and operating contracts with IHS under Public Law 93-638, in accordance with a previous resolution passed by the Navajo Nation Council.

According to the center's application, the Winslow Indian Health Care Center began its Methamphetamine and Suicide Prevention Initiative in 2009, serving eight Navajo chapters in remote areas. The application also states that five youth suicides have occurred in the past year alone in the center's service area.

Delegate Phelps also sponsored Legislation No. 0313-15, supporting the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation's grant application for approximately \$230,000 to continue its Methamphetamine and Suicide Prevention Initiative.

Delegate Phelps informed committee members that IHS announced award recipients which included a total of six locations on the Navajo Nation, however, a resolution was still required from the Nation.

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Although Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) voted in support of the legislations, he questioned the effectiveness of the funding in comparison to the rise in the number of suicides on the Navajo Nation.

“Is this really the answer to suicide? We keep getting these monies and the rate keeps going up,” said Delegate Tsosie, stating that the answer is to develop housing, economic development, and

to address other areas of need for Navajo communities in order to raise self-esteem among Navajo youth.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) said the communities within his legislative district are also in great need of suicide prevention services, particularly the community of Thoreau which has seen an incline in the number of suicides among Navajo youth.

Naabik’iyátí’ Committee members also approved Legislation No. 0315-15, sponsored by Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) which supports a grant application for methamphetamine, suicide prevention, and domestic violence prevent services for the Navajo Nation including tribal organizations and urban Indian health programs.

Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta), said he has met several times with various entities for the purpose of creating an interdisciplinary team to provide assistance to youth and their families who are impacted by suicides.

Additionally, Delegate Brown said the entities are planning to hold a suicide prevention summit and will meet on Oct. 19 to further discuss and plan their efforts. He added that he would request for the group to provide an update report to the Council at the opening day of the Fall Council Session on Oct. 19.