

Navajo Nation Council votes to fund Thoreau veterans service center

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 27 April 2018 07:41



WINDOW ROCK — On April 24, the Navajo Nation Council voted 19-0 to approve approximately \$2.4 million from the Navajo Nation's Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance to assist in the construction of a veterans service center in the community of Thoreau, which is located 33-miles east of Gallup near Interstate-40.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) was joined by Lester Emerson, who serves as the Eastern Navajo Veterans Organization vice commander and the commander for the Thoreau Chapter Veterans Committee, as they requested the support of the council.

Emerson said one of the top priorities is to work with the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services to secure a doctor to be stationed at the proposed service center to provide medical services and physical therapy for veterans, instead of having local veterans travel two hours to Albuquerque for medical services. He added that the center would also provide meeting space for veteran groups to hold meetings or events.

Yazzie also noted that the group secured \$134,500 from the Thoreau Chapter in matching funds, along with an additional \$780,000 in funding from the State of New Mexico Capital Outlay program, to assist with the overall cost of \$4,050,000.

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During the discussion, Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) pointed out that the council, through a separate legislation, had already approved \$694,444 for the project. As a result, the council passed an amendment to reduce the original funding request from \$3.1 million to \$2.4 million to fund the project fully.

Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock), who represents several chapters near the community of Thoreau, also asked his council colleagues to support the funding request to help many Navajo veterans who would benefit from the services offered at the center.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Navajo Nation Council voted 19-0 to approve Legislation No. 0130-17. President Russell Begaye will have 10 calendar days to consider the funding request once the resolution is delivered to the Office of the President and Vice President.