

Begay signs appropriation to fund \$5 million to general assistance programs

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WINDOW ROCK – Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye approved legislation for supplemental funding in the amount of \$5,038,678 to be taken from the Minimum Fund balance of the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for general assistance and welfare programs Jan. 17.

In a memorandum to Honorable Speaker LoRenzo Bates dated Jan. 17, President Begaye said the funds will be appropriated toward adult institutional care services, child welfare assistance and institutional care services, and for public assistance for general assistance.

“I am signing this appropriation to compensate the individuals who were not able to receive assistance in these last two months,” Begaye said. “This money will also go to paying for home care, foster care and shelter services, as over 800 children and 250 elders were impacted.”

Within November and December 2016, the Navajo Nation had over 14,000 families that were unable to receive general assistance. The shortfall in funding to these programs was due to the U.S. Department of Interior reducing budgets nationally by 20 percent.

“It was unfortunate that general assistance programs ran out of funding during the holiday season,” Begaye said.

Council certified the Resolution CJA-01-17, appropriating supplemental funding, on Jan. 4 with 16 voting in favor and 1 opposed.

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It waives Title 12 Finance Act Supplemental Appropriation requirements with regard to the designation of recurring and non-recurring revenues and operating expenses and use of the UUFB for recurring expenses for the Department of Family Services for general assistance and welfare services.

It also waives processes regarding the maintenance of the Minimum Fund Balance in the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance, UUFB for the Department of Family Services for general assistance and welfare services.

In his memorandum, the president cautioned the Council to seek consultation with the Navajo Nation Department of Justice (NNDOJ) on these matters as NNDOJ has raised issues on whether Council could waive Title 12 processes.

The president also noted that the Office of Management and Budget has raised concerns regarding decreasing the Minimum Fund balance below 10 percent and how it may affect the Navajo Nation credit rating with outside entities.

“Our monies should always be prioritized to assist the most needy, especially our children, our elders, and those people that are in difficult financial situations,” Begaye said. “These monies will be used to provide assistance to our children and our elders. That is why we are signing this appropriation.”