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Council gives chapters say in energy projects

By Noel Lyn Smith
Navajo Times

WINDOW ROCK, Dec. 30, 2010

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The Navajo Nation Council has approved a bill that would give chapters impacted by coal mining and other energy-related production a place at the negotiating table.

The legislation narrowly passed, 35-31, in a special session Dec. 22-23 and would allow affected chapters to review proposed leases before the tribe approves them.

"With this legislation, our local people can make the choice of conducting business. We need to give them some authority," said Amos Johnson (Forest Lake/Kits'íilí/Tsé Ch'ízhí), the bill's sponsor.

The bill also calls for the formation of a negotiating team to propose, review, negotiate and renegotiate the leases and agreements.

Membership on the team would consist of five residents from the impacted chapter, two delegates from the Resources and Economic Development committees of the Navajo Nation Council, and three individuals appointed by the president.

All members will serve at the pleasure of the Resources Committee.

No leases or agreements would be submitted to the president, the Resources Committee or the Council without approval of the impacted chapters, along with a complete analysis and recommendation by the negotiating team.

Johnson presented a similar bill to the Council during the spring session in April but that bill failed 19-45.

The Council was unable to override President Joe Shirley Jr.'s veto of amendments to the election code, voting 42-16 in favor of the override. A veto override needs 59 votes to pass.

The bill would have required the removal of elected officials convicted of a felony, but would have dropped misdemeanor convictions as grounds for removing the president, vice president or Council delegates. Misdemeanor convictions would also be dropped as a reason to remove candidates for those positions.

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A bill to legalize liquor was dropped from consideration because the sponsor, Ernest Yazzie (Bááhááli/Church Rock), was not in the Council Chamber when it was presented.

The Council rejected a second Yazzie bill, which would have renamed chapters as "units of local government" and change their description to community centers.

The Council approved \$286,000 from the general fund for Hoosh Dooh Dii To' Development Inc. It will pay for operational expenses and to recruit, train and employ staff for an assisted living facility being built by the nonprofit in Whippoorwill Chapter.

The Council passed a bill by Jonathan Nez (Shonto) that authorizes chapters to use funds carried over from prior budget years for any legal purpose.

This means that money allocated for one purpose, such as winter hardship, can be used to pay for utility expenses or scholarships for students, if the money is not from the current operating budget.

The Council passed legislation from Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) to amend the Navajo Nation Local Governance Act. The bill would allow chapters to hire chapter managers on a one-year contract and as either a chapter employee or as an independent contractor.

After one year, chapter officials can review the contract.

The Council also passed a bill, sponsored by Ida Nelson (Red Rock), to change the name of Red Rock Chapter to its traditional name of Tsé Lichíí' Chapter.

Martha L. King and Danielle Her Many Horses were confirmed to four-year terms as members of the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise Board of Directors.

In a recall vote, the Council passed the Navajo Nation Cross-Commission Agreement Act, prohibiting the search and arrest of tribal members by state, county or municipal law enforcement officers without an approved deputation agreement with the tribe.

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What a CHRISTMAS "GIFT"!!! The 21st NN Council has given to the People of the Navajo Nation!! When it comes to "positive" legislation that the Navajo Nation Council has implemented there is absolutely nothing said. The NN Council has given the Navajo People a part in negotiating with outside companies and energy companies.

It has always been the NN government (executive branch) who has been dealing with these companies with "SAD" and "SHADY" results.

The Navajo People have always been ignored, stepped on, chased off, and "bullied around", By these companies and our own EXECUTIVE BRANCH of government.

The Navajo People are tired of this, and have stood up for their rights, their land, and their family. DESERT ROCK is a fine example.

The current and now out-going Navajo Nation Council President Mr. Joe Shirley adamantly opposed this project from the beginning, to the end. He along with the Resource Committee Chair George Arthur, Norman John, Dine Power Authority (DPA), Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA).

We are VERY GLAD that these people are out. As for the NTUA their leadership is out of bounds. DPA needs to be "dismantled". Over \$20 million dollars is gone, and they have nothing to show for it. Where did That money go?

We hope only for the best in this 2011 New Year, but with this New 24 CD NN Gov. Everything is going to go into a "stand still". We will see the damage Joe Shirley has done.

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