



## Navajo Nation Council addresses presidential veto abuse with overrides creating protections for Navajo People

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**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Friday, the 24th Navajo Nation Council addressed four presidential vetoes by approving override legislation at a special session. “The Navajo Nation Council’s actions today may not mean a lot to some in Window Rock, but for local leaders and Navajo People across the Navajo Nation, they were necessary and long-overdue,” said 24th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon.

Navajo Nation boards and commissions within the Legislative Branch can now conduct meetings through telecommunication methods, like Skype or through conference call. The override stated, “The Navajo Nation Council does not agree with the President’s veto of CAP-18-20 and continues to believe that CAP-18-20 is necessary to operate the government while protecting employees, officials and the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.” That earlier resolution was approved by the Navajo Nation Council on Apr. 13, 2020.

That action was approved through Legislation No. 0101-20 by a vote of 19 in favor and 4 opposed with Speaker Not Voting. The council delegates who voted ‘green’ on override Legislation No. 0101-20 were: Elmer Begay, Paul Begay, Nathaniel Brown, Eugenia Charles-Newton, Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Herman Daniels, Jr., Mark Freeland, Pernel Halona, Jamie Henio, Vince R. James, Carl Slater, Rickie Nez, Wilson Stewart, Jr., Daniel Tso, Otto Tso, Thomas Walker, Jr., Edison Wauneka, Edmund Yazzie and Jimmy Yellowhair.

Navajo Nation chapter meetings may now be held through teleconferencing methods, which is the recommended meeting method during the current coronavirus pandemic. The override addresses the need for chapter officials to provide for community needs during the COVID-19 public health crisis. The Nez-Lizer administration closed chapter houses with the Navajo Nation’s emergency declaration and have continued to restrict the authority of local communities by vetoing legislation passed earlier by the Navajo Nation Council. This override restores some of the balance between Navajo Nation Chapters and President Jonathan Nez.

That action was approved through Legislation No. 0102-20 by a vote of 20 in favor and 3 opposed with Speaker Not Voting. The council delegates who voted ‘green’ on override Legislation No. 0102-20 were: Elmer Begay, Paul Begay, Nathaniel Brown, Eugenia Charles-Newton, Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Herman Daniels, Jr., Mark Freeland, Pernel Halona, Jamie Henio, Vince R. James, Rickie Nez, Carl Slater, Raymond Smith, Jr., Charlaine Tso, Daniel Tso, Otto Tso, Thomas Walker, Jr., Edison Wauneka, Edmund Yazzie and Jimmy Yellowhair.

The Navajo Nation Council also acted to protect the Navajo People from price gouging by businesses located on the Navajo Nation. President Nez complained that the Council could not prove how the legislation impacted Navajo Nation’s sovereignty when he vetoed the entire legislation.

“The Navajo People elected us to fight for their issues. When a business takes advantage of the emergency situation to increase its prices by two or three times overnight, the Navajo people lose their ability to make choices. That is the heart of our sovereignty, the ability to make decisions for ourselves. That’s something leaders should understand. This action was necessary when the Navajo People first began reporting this issue a month ago,” said Council Delegate Thomas Walker, Jr.

That action was approved through Legislation No. 0103-20 by a vote of 19 in favor and 4 opposed with Speaker Not Voting. The council delegates who voted 'green' on override Legislation No. 0103-20 were: Elmer Begay, Paul Begay, Nathaniel Brown, Eugenia Charles-Newton, Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Herman Daniels, Jr., Mark Freeland, Pernell Halona, Jamie Henio, Vince R. James, Rickie Nez, Carl Slater, Raymond Smith, Jr., Daniel Tso, Otto Tso, Thomas Walker, Jr., Edison Wauneka, Edmund Yazzie and Jimmy Yellowhair.

The Council also approved override Legislation No. 0120-20, which temporarily authorizes and approves attendance at Navajo Nation farm board, land board, and district grazing committee meetings through telecommunication methods. This legislation was necessary for the Navajo Nation's local leaders to continue conducting agricultural decisions without exposing each other to COVID-19. President Nez vetoed the prior approval by the Navajo Nation Council.

That action was approved through Legislation No. 0120-20 by a vote of 21 in favor and 2 opposed with Speaker Not Voting. The council delegates who voted 'green' on override Legislation No. 0120-20 were: Elmer Begay, Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Paul Begay, Nathaniel Brown, Eugenia Charles-Newton, Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Herman Daniels, Jr., Mark Freeland, Pernell Halona, Jamie Henio, Vince R. James, Rickie Nez, Carl Slater, Raymond Smith, Jr., Wilson Stewart, Jr., Daniel Tso, Otto Tso, Thomas Walker, Jr., Edison Wauneka, Edmund Yazzie and Jimmy Yellowhair.

"The participation of our local elected leaders, especially those representing Title 26-certified chapter governments and regional agricultural boards, has always been a vital part of Navajo sovereignty. The Navajo Nation Council understands this important aspect and is willing to fight to restore local representation and authority while looking out for their the public's health and wellbeing," said Speaker Damon.

All overrides were presented to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee for discussion and went directly to vote at the full Navajo Nation Council due to the prior discussion. The resolutions go into effect immediately upon certification by Speaker Damon, which is expected take place by Friday evening. Navajo Nation Council legislation can be found on the Diné Bibeel'áanii Binaaltsoos online legislative tracking system at: <http://dibb.nnols.org/>.

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