23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 27, 2016

MEDIA CONTACTS
Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Law and Order Committee to pursue MOA to allow Monument Valley Fire Department to provide services to Navajo communities in Arizona

OLJATO, Utah – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee received a report from the Monument Valley Fire Department and Oljato Chapter regarding fire safety and emergency response issues. The Monument Valley Fire Department is located in Oljato, Utah, which is located 27-miles north of Kayenta, Arizona.

According to Oljato Chapter community services coordinator Shirlee Bedonie, the fire station is located within San Juan County, Utah and a few feet away from the Arizona state line border. San Juan County administrates the fire station and the volunteer fire fighters are from San Juan County however, they cannot respond to fire or emergency calls in Arizona due to liability issues, added Bedonie.

"The fire station is experiencing problems with jurisdiction and boundaries with the states of Arizona and Utah. The community of Oljato and surrounding communities need the fire safety services regardless of these issues. We need to find a way to resolve this problem," stated LOC member Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. (Shonto, Naa'tsis'Áán, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin), who represents the community of Oljato.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) expressed concern for the safety of local residents and said the jurisdiction issue needs to be resolved between the two states.

The fire station was built in 2006 by the Oljato Chapter with funding from the Utah Trust Fund, Utah Revitalization funds, and Navajo Nation Capital Improvement Plan funds and the two fire trucks and fire equipment were donated by San Juan County, added Bedonie.

San Juan County chief administrative officer Kelly Pehrson said that in addition to administering the fire station the county also insures the building and the equipment. The only issue is that San Juan County volunteer firefighters cannot enter Arizona due to federal funding guidelines and insurance liability. In the past, the county tried to reach out to Navajo Nation Department of Justice to establish a Memorandum of Agreement with Arizona so the volunteer firefighters can assist in both states without liability issues, added Pehrson.

“The committee was not aware that San Juan County has tried to reach NNDOJ to work on a MOA. This issue needs a revisit with all parties involved. The ownership and jurisdiction issues need to be resolved quickly because our citizens need fire protection. The Navajo Nation Fire Department also needs to provide an assessment regarding jurisdiction on all fire stations on the Nation,” stated LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood).

The Law and Order Committee approved the report with a 4-0 vote with a recommendation to conduct a follow-up meeting to address the development of a Memorandum of Agreement that would allow the county to provide emergency services for Navajo communities in the state of Arizona also.

# # #

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council