



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Budget and Finance Committee approves sanction on Mariano Lake Chapter**

**WINDOW ROCK** – On Wednesday, the Budget and Finance Committee approved Legislation No. 0268-16, which imposes a sanction on the Mariano Lake Chapter for failure to implement a corrective action plan to remedy financial deficiencies.

According to the legislation, in 2011 the Navajo Nation Office of the Auditor General conducted a compliance audit on the chapter and issued an audit report, which served as the basis for a corrective action plan that was approved in March 2013 for the chapter to implement.

Navajo Nation auditor general Elizabeth Begay, reported that as of June 2016, the chapter has not demonstrated improvements to ensure accountability and safeguarding of the chapter's assets and resources that has resulted in deficiencies in internal controls, and has become non-compliant with funding laws and guidelines.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) said that the chapter should receive a fair chance to carry out the remaining deficiencies on the chapter's CAP to avoid sanctioning that would result in 20-percent of the chapter's budget to be withheld.

"Give the chapters six months to make these corrections. With the issue here, I don't want the chapter's funding to be affected and I don't want to set the chapter back in any way," said Delegate Yazzie.

BFC vice chair Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) expressed concern regarding the recommended time extension for Mariano Lake Chapter to correct its deficiencies.

"The communities have had three and a half-years to implement their own CAP, which they developed and they signed off on. 19 of 22 deficiencies are still not resolved. The extension of six-months is essentially telling chapter officials that they can slide and wait until the next administration comes in next year and hold them accountable. I don't agree with that," said Delegate Witherspoon.

Delegate Witherspoon recommended that the chapter fund an additional audit after the deficiencies have been resolved, then the chapter would have the opportunity to have the sanctions removed.

BFC member Council Delegate Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai'Bii'To, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) said that the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development should begin aiding chapters to ensure they follow budget policy guidelines.

“The Division of Community Development needs to work with the chapters. The chapters need to make solutions and policies need to be developed to keep them on track and stop delaying the process. We have to give these services to the Navajo people and if a chapter is sanctioned, it affects those services,” said Delegate Slim.

At the conclusion of Wednesday’s discussion, BFC members voted 4-1 to approve Legislation No. 0268-16. The BFC serves as the final authority for the bill.

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