

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY SHEET

Tracking No. 0251-21

DATE: November 15, 2021

TITLE OF RESOLUTION:

AN ACT RELATING TO LAW AND ORDER, BUDGET AND FINANCE AND NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEES, AND THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; REFERRING REFERENDUM MEASURE ON QUESTION WHETHER TO AMEND TITLE 2 TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL DELEGATES FROM 24 TO 48 MEMBERS BEGINNING WITH THE NOVEMBER 2026 NAVAJO NATION GENERAL ELECTIONS

PURPOSE: This resolution, if adopted, would refer a referendum measure on the question of whether Title 2 should be amended to increase the number of Navajo Nation Council Delegates from 24 to 48 members beginning with the November 2026 Navajo Nation General Elections.

This written summary does not address recommended amendments as may be provided by the standing committees. The Office of Legislative Counsel requests each Council Delegate to review each proposed resolution in detail.

5-DAY BILL HOLD PERIOD: VS held house
Website Posting Time/Date: Nov. 22, 2021 @ 5:55pm
Posting End Date: November 27, 2021
Eligible for Action: November 28, 2021

Law & Order Committee
Thence
Budget & Finance Committee
Thence
Naabik'iyáti' Committee
Thence
Navajo Nation Council

PROPOSED NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL RESOLUTION
24th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL – Third Year, 2021

Introduced by:


(Prime Sponsor)

Tracking No. 0257-21

AN ACT

RELATING TO LAW AND ORDER, BUDGET AND FINANCE, AND
NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEES, AND THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL;
ESTABLISHING A REFERENDUM FOR DINÉ VOTERS TO DECIDE
WHETHER TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NAVAJO NATION
COUNCIL DELEGATES FROM 24 TO 48, BEGINNING WITH THE
NOVEMBER 2026 NAVAJO NATION GENERAL ELECTION

BE IT ENACTED:

SECTION ONE. AUTHORITY

- A. The Law and Order Committee of the Navajo Nation Council is authorized to review and make recommendations to the Navajo Nation Council regarding proposed amendments to the Navajo Nation Code. 2 N.N.C. §601(B)(14).
- B. The Budget and Finance Committee of the Navajo Nation Council is authorized to “coordinate and review all fiscal, financial and investment activities of the Navajo Nation and its enterprises, as well as other agencies, federal, state, regional and private, expending or seeking to expend funds within the Navajo Nation or for the benefit of the Navajo People.” 2 N.N.C. §301(B)(5).
- C. The Naabik'iyáti' Committee of the Navajo Nation Council is authorized to review proposed

1 resolutions requiring final action by the Navajo Nation Council. 2 N.N.C. §164(A)(9).

2 D. The Navajo Nation Council, as the elected and governing body of the Navajo Nation, sets
3 policy for the Navajo Nation. 2 N.N.C. §102(A). Pursuant to 11 N.N.C. §403(A), the Navajo
4 Nation Council may refer a referendum for public vote.

5
6 **SECTION TWO. FINDINGS**

7 A. Currently, the Navajo Nation Council has a membership of 24 delegates. 2 N.N.C. §102(A).

8 The 24 number of delegates was previously established by an initiative vote of Diné voters.

9 B. Pursuant to the Navajo Nation Election Code, Navajo Nation laws may be enacted through
10 a public initiative or referendum by public vote. 11 N.N.C. §§401 *et seq.*

11 C. The Navajo Nation Election Code, at 11 N.N.C. §409(C), provides:

12
13 C. Legislation adopted by a referendum/initiative election shall be amended or repealed
14 only:

15 1. By the outcome of a vote on a subsequent referendum or initiative election concerning
16 the same subject matter as that of the referendum/initiative which originally adopted the
17 legislation; or

18 2. For a Navajo Nation-wide referendum or initiative election, by 3/4 vote of the full
19 membership of the Navajo Nation Council at a regular session of the Navajo Nation
20 Council.

21
22 D. The Navajo Nation Supreme Court has stated:

23 “Under Fundamental Law, the Navajo People, as well as the Council, may make laws for
24 the good of the community; the People’s authority to make laws is not delegated to them by
25 the Council [citing 1 N.N.C. §201 and §206]. The referendum and initiative processes are
26 modern acknowledgments of this authority [citing, 11 N.N.C. §§401, *et seq.*]. Such
27 authority is also acknowledged by the Diné leaders who approved the Treaty of 1868, who
28 agreed that future alienation of Navajo land required a three-quarters vote of the Navajo
29 People. *Treaty of 1868 between the United States and the Navajo Tribe of Indians*, June 1,
30 1868, Art. 10, 15 Stat. 667, 670. The Council may reasonably regulate the People’s authority

1 to make laws through setting qualifications for voters in such referenda and initiatives,
2 [citation omitted] but the ultimate power to govern the Nation always remains with the
3 People. There is no question that the People as ‘Navajo voters’ may amend this, or any other
4 law through the referendum or initiative process;” *In the Matter of Two Initiative*
5 *Petitions Filed by Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.* 9 Nav. R. 200, 203 (Nav. Sup.
6 Ct. 2008).

7 E. According to the Navajo Supreme Court, “the People may reduce or increase the size [of
8 the Council]; there is no language in Section 102(A) to suggest otherwise.” *Id.*, at 204.
9 The Supreme Court ultimately ruled: “[t]he Navajo Nation Council may not amend Section
10 102(a) independently; it must defer to the will of the Navajo People.” *Id.* at 204.

11 F. The Commission on Navajo Government Development (“CNGD”) was established by the
12 Navajo Nation Council to implement reforms necessary to ensure an accountable and
13 responsible government. See Resolution No. CD-68-89. The CNGD was established with
14 quasi-independent authority. 2 N.N.C. §970. Today, the purposes of the CNGD include
15 reviewing and evaluating aspects of the existing governmental structure of the Navajo
16 Nation, including central and local governments. 2 N.N.C. §971.

17 G. In Resolution No. NGD-0902-19 the CNGD recommends that the Navajo Nation Council
18 establish a referendum for Navajo voters on whether the Council should be increased from
19 24 to 48 delegates. **EXHIBIT A.**

20 H. To ensure the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Diné to participate
21 in their democracy, Diné voters should determine through referendum whether the size of
22 the Navajo Nation Council should be increased from 24 to 48 members. Diné voters should
23 be provided this opportunity at the November 8, 2022 Navajo Nation General Election.

24
25 **SECTION THREE. ESTABLISHING A REFERENDUM FOR DINÉ VOTERS TO**
26 **DECIDE WHETHER TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NAVAJO NATION**
27 **COUNCIL DELEGATES FROM 24 TO 48**

28 A. The Navajo Nation Council hereby establishes a referendum measure for Diné voters to
29 decide whether to increase the number of Navajo Nation Council delegates from 24 to 48.
30 If this measure is approved by the voters and enacted, it shall be effective beginning with

1 the Navajo Nation 2026 General Election.

2 B. Subject to the authority of the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors as set forth in 11
3 N.N.C. §403(A) and §407, the measure referred herein shall be placed on the November 8,
4 2022 Navajo Nation General Election ballot with the language to read as follows:

5
6 **Official Title:** REFERENDUM INCREASING THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
7 FROM 24 TO 48 DELEGATES.

8 **Descriptive Summary:** This referendum gives Diné voters the opportunity to decide by
9 majority vote whether the number of delegates to the Navajo Nation Council should be
10 increased from 24 to 48, beginning with the November 2026 Navajo Nation General
11 Election.

12 **Brief Statement of Legal Effect:**

13 A. "YES" vote is in favor of increasing the number of delegates to the Navajo Nation
14 Council from 24 to 48, beginning with the November 2026 Navajo Nation General
15 Election. A "YES" vote will have the effect of amending Title 2 of the Navajo Nation
16 Code as set forth in the complete text of the legislation referred by this referendum
17 measure.

18 B. "NO" vote is against increasing the number of delegates to the Navajo Nation Council
19 from 24 to 48. A "NO" vote will have no effect on the current status of Navajo Nation
20 law, thereby allowing the current number of 24 delegates to remain as is.

21 **Referendum Ballot Question:** "Shall the number of delegates to the Navajo Nation
22 Council be increased from 24 to 48 delegates, beginning with the November 2026 Navajo
23 Nation General Election?"

24 _____ "YES" - the number of delegates shall be increased from 24 to 48

25 _____ "NO" - the current number of 24 delegates shall remain as is

26
27
28 **SECTION FOUR. COMPLETE TEXT OF PROPOSED TITLE 2 AMENDMENT FOR**
29 **THE REFERENDUM**

30 The Navajo Nation Council hereby refers the complete text of proposed legislation for the

referendum to amend Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code as follows:

Title 2. Navajo Nation Government

Chapter 3. Legislative Branch

Subchapter 1. Navajo Nation Council

* * * *

§ 102. Powers; Composition

A. The Navajo Nation Council shall be the governing body of the Navajo Nation and shall consist of ~~24~~ 48 delegates.

* * * *

SECTION FIVE. REVIEW BY NAVAJO BOARD OF ELECTION SUPERVISORS

The Navajo Board of Election Supervisors shall review the proposed referendum measure for purposes of ensuring compliance with provisions of the Navajo Nation Election Code, including 11 N.N.C. §§ 401, 402 and 407.

SECTION SIX. VOTE REQUIRED

Pursuant to 11 N.N.C. § 406(A), the measure referred herein shall pass by majority of votes cast. *See also, Nelson v. Initiative Committee to Reduce Navajo Nation Council*, 9 Nav. R. 350, 358 (Nav. Sup. Ct. 2010).

SECTION SEVEN. APPORTIONMENT PLAN

If the referendum is approved, and upon certification of the voting results:

- A. The Navajo Board of Election Supervisors shall consult with the Office of the Speaker and the Department of Justice, and other consultants as appropriate, regarding the development of a Chapter apportionment plan for the 48-member Navajo Nation Council.
- B. A proposed Chapter apportionment plan based on a 48-member Council shall be prepared and timely submitted to the 25th Navajo Nation Council for its approval. Along with the proposed apportionment plan, all amendments to the Navajo Nation Code, which may be

1 necessary as a result of the adoption of the apportionment plan, shall also be presented to the
2 Navajo Nation Council for its approval.

3
4 **SECTION EIGHT. CODIFICATION**

- 5 A. The approved amendment shall be codified by the Office of Legislative Counsel.
6 B. The Office of Legislative Counsel is authorized to make any changes in the Election Code
7 that may be necessary as a result of the approved amendment and apportionment plan.

8
9 **SECTION NINE. EFFECTIVE DATE**

10 This Legislation of the Navajo Nation Council shall become effective pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §
11 221(B), subject to referendum vote as provided herein.

12
13 **SECTION TEN. SAVING CLAUSE**

14 If any portion of this Legislation, or the 2 N.N.C. amendment approved by the referendum
15 established herein, is determined invalid by the Navajo Nation Supreme Court, or by a District
16 Court of the Navajo Nation without appeal to the Navajo Nation Supreme Court, those portions
17 of this Legislation, or the referendum, that are not determined invalid shall remain the law of
18 the Navajo Nation.



**RESOLUTION OF THE
COMMISSION ON NAVAJO GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT**

AN ACTION TO RECOMMEND TO THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL AND THE NAVAJO BOARD OF ELECTION SUPERVISORS TO APPROVE AND AUTHORIZE A REFERENDUM MEASURE ON WHETHER THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL SHOULD BE INCREASED FROM 24 TO 48 MEMBERS AS PART OF AN EFFORT TO INCREASE THE COUNCIL'S EFFICIENCY, ENHANCE DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION, IMPROVE PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES AND QUORUM, AND REDUCED THE OVER-COMMITTED SUB-COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS.

WHEREAS:

1. Pursuant to CD-68-89, the Navajo Nation Council established the Commission ("Commission") on Navajo Government Development including the Office of Navajo Government Development with quasi-independent authority to accomplish the Navajo Nation Council's project of instituting reforms necessary to ensure an accountable and responsible government; and
2. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 971 (1994 as amended), the purpose of the Commission on Navajo Government Development shall be as follows: (A) To review and evaluate all aspects of the existing government structure of the Navajo Nation including laws, rules and regulations, practices, functions, goals and objectives of the central government as it relates to Chapters, and local communities and the relationship of Chapters and local communities and the relationship of Chapters and local communities to the central government; and
3. In 2009, the Navajo Nation Council was reduced from 88 to 24 Delegates by an initiative and as a result the Navajo Nation Council compressed the duties and responsibilities of 12 Standing Committees to five (5) Standing Committees; and
4. On January 14, 2016, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council issued NABIIA-02-16: An Action Relating to Naabik'íyáti' Committee, Directing the Commission and the Office of Navajo Government Development to provide a report and recommendation on the effectiveness of the downsized Navajo Nation Council and the responsiveness of the Navajo Nation Council; and
5. The Naabik'íyáti' Committee of the Navajo Nation hereby directs the Commission on Navajo Government Development and the Office of Government Development to provide a *recommendation* on instituting reforms necessary to ensure an accountable and responsible government; and
6. The Report demonstrates that Council Delegates have limited time for constituency outreach and attending chapter meeting and thus an institutional change commands for an increase in the number of Council Delegates; and
7. The majority of respondents, both the people and officials, strongly support to increase the number of Council Delegates and when looking at the chapter officials' only survey results it shows a comparable thirty-percent favor to increase the Navajo Nation Council Delegates from 24 to 48 and, by putting the two highest percentages in combined perspective, the result of this

process show that 60 percent of respondents favor a Council Delegate increase to 48 member; and

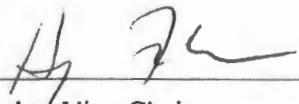
8. The Commission on Navajo Government Development as an oversight and the Office of Navajo Government Development as an administrative instrument conducted a methodical study on the downsizing of the Navajo Nation Council by examining the Navajo electorate and Chapter Officials, it provided the Commission a novel set of data with which to analyze both the *effectiveness* and the *responsiveness* of the Navajo Nation Council; and
9. Critical information has emerged from this study that will be useful for the Navajo Nation government and its citizenry across several spectrums, whether attempting to better understand Navajo Nation Council's responsibilities, their effectiveness on their job, defining if democratic representation was diminished and should the number of Council be increased is exclusively left up to the People of the great Navajo Nation.

NOW THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Commission on Navajo Government Development has previously accepted the *2016 Navajo People and Chapter Officials Survey, Effectiveness on the Reduced Navajo Nation Council*, also known as "Efficacy Report;" and
2. The Commission on Navajo Government Development recognizes the need to increase Council's efficiency, enhance democratic representation, improve parliamentary procedures and quorum requirements, and to reduce the over-committed sub-committee assignment; and
3. The Commission on Navajo Government Development hereby recommends to the 24th Navajo Nation Council and the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors to approve and authorize a Referendum Measure to be placed before the Navajo electorate during 2020 the Navajo Nation Primary Election on whether the Navajo Nation Council should be increased from 24 to 48 members.

CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Commission on Navajo Government Development at a duly called meeting in Cow Springs, Navajo Nation (Arizona) at which a quorum was present and that same was passed by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 and abstained, this 14th day of September, 2019.


 Dr. Henry Fowler, Vice-Chair
 Commission on Navajo Government Development

Motion: Emmett Kerley

Second: Philmer Bluehouse

**LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
NAVAJO NATION**



HONORABLE SETH DAMON
Speaker 24th Navajo Nation Council

September 4, 2019

Seth Damon, Speaker
Navajo Nation Council
P.O. Box 3390
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Dear Honorable Speaker Damon,

The Commission on Navajo Government Development plans to hold its next regular meeting on Saturday, September 14, 2019, at Cow Springs, AZ (Mrs. Sally Fowler residence, mother of Commissioner Dr. Henry Fowler).

Pursuant to Resolution No.: CS-54-17, Commissioner Fowler's term expires on September 15, 2019, and the Commission has agreed to hold their next meeting inside a traditional Navajo Male Hogan while honoring a traditional medicine bundle (*Jish*) as a guiding principle and away from Window Rock, AZ and, before Commissioner Fowler's term expires.

Pursuant to 2 N.N.C., § 974 (A)(2), "All meetings shall be held in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona) for the transaction of the Commission business. Meetings held elsewhere must be authorized by written permission of the Chairperson Intergovernmental Relations Committee."

The Commission intends to discuss "government reform" recommendations based on two back-to-back work sessions and there will be new business items to be considered. Therefore, please consider this letter as a formal written request to hold the Commission's next meeting away from Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona).

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Edward Dee, Executive Director, with the Office of Navajo Government Development at (928) 871-6378.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JoAnn Dedman".

JoAnn Dedman, Chairperson
Commission on Navajo Government Development

APPROVE / DISAPPROVE:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seth Damon".
9/5/19
Honorable Seth Damon, Speaker
The 24th Navajo Nation Council

cc: Edward McCool, Acting Chief Legal Counsel, Office of Legislative Counsel

**LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
NAVAJO NATION**



HONORABLE SETH DAMON
Speaker, 24th Navajo Nation Council

August 3, 2020

Edison Wauneka, Council Delegate
The 24th Navajo Nation Council
Post Office Box 3390
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Dear Honorable Delegate Wauneka,

Yá'át'tééh! On September 14, 2019, the Commission on Navajo Government Development ("Commission") passed Resolution No. CNGD-0902-19: AN ACTION TO RECOMMEND TO THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL AND THE NAVAJO BOARD OF ELECTION SUPERVISORS TO APPROVE AND AUTHORIZE A REFERENDUM MEASURE ON WHETHER THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL SHOULD BE INCREASED FROM 24 TO 48 MEMBERS AS PART OF AN EFFORT TO INCREASE THE COUNCIL'S EFFICIENCY, ENHANCE DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION, IMPROVE PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES AND QUORUM, AND REDUCED THE OVER-COMMITTED SUB-COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS.

In January 2016, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council Naabik'íyáti Committee passed NABIJA-02-16, to examine the reduced Navajo Nation Council's effectiveness and responsiveness, so to initiate candid discussion regarding any government reform examination, whether the reduced Council should be reconsidered from 24 to 48.

The Office of Navajo Government Development undertook a thorough research and analysis covering a period of one-year regarding the reduced Navajo Nation Council and its effectiveness and responsiveness. The Report demonstrates that the drastic reduction of Council delegates (a 72% reduction) impacts the limited time for constituency outreach, diminished democratic representation, and a decline in local governmental activities. The Report also revealed the extensive reduction of Navajo lawmakers created an influx of compounding problems, e.g., vast decrease in democratic representation, a decreased of the parliamentary procedures, and an over-contracted and over-burden of committees.

Therefore, the Commission on Navajo Government Development took action in September 2019 to recommend to the Navajo Nation Council to consider a referendum measure to be placed on the upcoming November Election for the Navajo People to decide whether to increase Navajo lawmakers from 24 to 48.

The Commission and Office of Navajo Government Development request your assistance to sponsor a legislation to advance the Commission Resolution CNGD-0902-19.

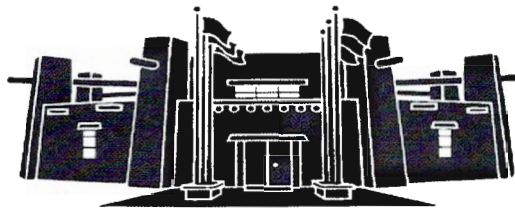
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (928) 871-6378.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Dee".

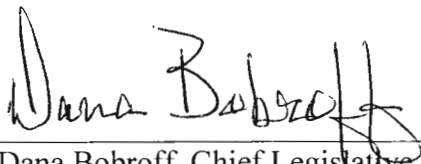
Edward K. Dee, Executive Director
Office of Navajo Government Development

cc: JoAnn Dedman, Chairwomen, Commission on Navajo Government Development
File



MEMORANDUM

To : Hon. Edison Wauneka, Delegate
Navajo Nation Council

From : 
Dana Bobroff, Chief Legislative Counsel
Office of Legislative Counsel

Date : November 15, 2021

Re : AN ACT RELATING TO LAW AND ORDER, BUDGET AND FINANCE
AND NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEES, AND THE NAVAJO NATION
COUNCIL; REFERRING REFERENDUM MEASURE ON QUESTION
WHETHER TO AMEND TITLE 2 TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL DELEGATES FROM 24 TO 48 MEMBERS
BEGINNING WITH THE NOVEMBER 2026 NAVAJO NATION
GENERAL ELECTIONS

As requested, I have prepared the above-referenced proposed resolution and associated legislative summary sheet pursuant to your request for legislative drafting. As to format, the resolution as drafted is legally sufficient. Regarding substance, as with any legislation, it can be subject to review by the courts in the event of proper challenge. Please ensure that this particular resolution request is precisely what you want.

If you are satisfied with the proposed resolution, please sign it as "sponsor" and submit it to the Office of Legislative Services where it will be given a tracking number and sent to the Office of the Speaker for assignment. If the proposed resolution is unacceptable to you, please contact me at the Office of Legislative Counsel and advise me of the changes you would like made to the proposed resolution. Ahéhee'.

OLC # 20-319-1

THE NAVAJO NATION
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
INTERNET PUBLIC REVIEW PUBLICATION



LEGISLATION NO: _0251-21_

SPONSOR: Edison J. Wauneka

TITLE: An Act Relating to Law and Order, Budget and Finance, and Naabik'iyáti' Committees, and the Navajo Nation Council; Establishing a Referendum for Diné Voters to Decide Whether to Increase the Number of Navajo Nation Council Delegates from 24 to 48, Beginning with the November 2026 Navajo Nation General Election

Date posted: November 22, 2021 at 5:53PM

Digital comments may be e-mailed to comments@navajo-nsn.gov

Written comments may be mailed to:

Executive Director
Office of Legislative Services
P.O. Box 3390
Window Rock, AZ 86515
(928) 871-7586

Comments may be made in the form of chapter resolutions, letters, position papers, etc. Please include your name, position title, address for written comments; a valid e-mail address is required. Anonymous comments will not be included in the Legislation packet.

Please note: This digital copy is being provided for the benefit of the Navajo Nation chapters and public use. Any political use is prohibited. All written comments received become the property of the Navajo Nation and will be forwarded to the assigned Navajo Nation Council standing committee(s) and/or the Navajo Nation Council for review. Any tampering with public records are punishable by Navajo Nation law pursuant to 17 N.N.C. §374 *et. seq.*