

RESOLUTION OF THE  
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL—FIRST YEAR, 2015

AN ACTION

RELATING TO HEALTH, EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES, NAABIK'ÍYÁTI', AND NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES VETERAN AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATION AND ARIZONA REPRESENTATIVE ANN KIRKPATRICK TO INVESTIGATE AND PROVIDE RELIEF TO THE VETERAN AFFAIRS CHINLE FACILITY AND NAVAJO NATION VETERANS

**WHEREAS:**

- A. "Statements of Policy are written statements submitted to federal, state or local governments, by a Navajo Nation official stating the official position of the Navajo Nation on proposed legislation or other action by that government." 2 N.N.C. §110 (W) (2012) *see also* CO-45-12.
- B. Statements of policy "must be reviewed and approved by resolution by the appropriate standing committee(s) and the Navajo Nation Council..." 2 N.N.C. §164(A) (2012) *see also* CO-45-12.
- C. The Navajo Nation established the Health, Education and Human Services Committee (HEHS) as a Navajo Nation Council standing committee and as such empowered HEHS to review and recommend resolutions regarding veterans and/or veteran services. 2 N.N.C. §§ 164 (A)(9), 400 (A), 401 (B)(6)(a) (2012) *see also* CO-45-12.
- D. The Navajo Nation established the Naabik'íyáti' Committee as a Navajo Nation Council standing committee and as such empowered Naabik'íyáti' to coordinate all federal programs, i.e. Department of Veteran's Affairs and Indian Health Service, to provide efficient services to Navajo veterans. 2 N.N.C. §§ 164 (A)(9), 700 (A), 701 (A)(4) (2012) *see also* CO-45-12.
- E. Historically, Native Americans served in the military at a higher rate than any other ethnic group. U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, HEALTH CARE ACCESS: IMPROVED OVERSIGHT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND PRIORITIZATION CAN IMPROVE ACCESS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS 1 (2014).

- F. The Navajo Nation has a government-to-government relationship with the United States of America. Treaty of 1850, Sept. 24, 1850, 9 Stat. 974 and Treaty of 1868, Aug. 12, 1868, 15 Stat. 667.
- G. According to the 2000 Census, there were seven thousand twenty (7,020) Navajo's, living on and off the reservation, who reported they were veterans; one thousand five hundred seven (1,507) were over the age of 65. U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, U.S. SUMMARY: 2000 SUMMARY SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS 907 (2003).
- H. Within the last year, reports of excessive and sometimes deadly waiting times for veterans seeking government health care came to light and President Obama promised accountability. Scott Bronstein & Tom Cohen, Obama: Shinseki stays for now, but VA misconduct will be punished, CNN (May 23, 2014) available at [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com).
- I. In 2010, tribal leaders and representatives offered comments on the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) and Indian Health Service (IHS) 2010 Memorandum of Understanding and other health related issues. One comment recorded showed that IHS understood the native culture, languages, and background; however, IHS did not understand the specific needs of Native veterans like the VA, i.e. post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). The VA's response this particular comment was the Chinle facility which focused on mental health, PTSD and TBI; the staff was working on learning the cultural aspect from the Native Chinle staff. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS: 2012 TRIBAL CONSULTATION REPORT 11 (2012).
- J. Two years after the Chinle program receive recognition, the Chinle Chapter Veterans Organization requests an immediate inquiry as to why the United States Department of Veteran Affairs Readjustment Counseling Services, located in Chinle, AZ is without office space and to re-assign the Mobile Vet Center back to Chinle because these services are an asset to the Navajo veterans. EXHIBIT A.

- K. The Navajo Nation Council recognized in Diyin Bits'áádéé Beehaz'áanii that they will "use their experience and wisdom to always act in the best interest of the people ...ensure the rights and freedoms of the generations yet to come..." 1 N.N.C. § 203 (A) (2009).
- L. This request aligns with the Navajo Nation's position to support addressing the needs of the Navajo veterans.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

- A. The Navajo Nation respectfully urges the VA and Arizona Representative Ann Kirkpatrick to investigate the present condition of the VA's Chinle facility and improve health care access to Navajo veterans.
- B. The Navajo Nation hereby authorizes the Navajo Nation President, the Navajo Nation Speaker, and their designees, to advocate for this investigation.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Council at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona) at which a quorum was present and that the same was passed by a vote of 19 in favor and 0 opposed, this 30<sup>th</sup> day of June 2015.



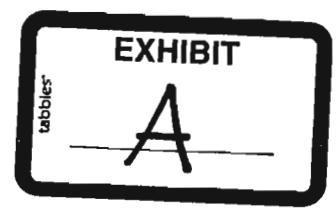
LoRenzo Bates, Speaker  
Navajo Nation Council

7-6-15

Date

Motion: Honorable Raymond Smith, Jr.  
Second: Honorable Benjamin Bennett

Support Resolution of the  
**CHINLE CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION**  
Chinle, Arizona 86503



Resolution # CCVO-01-12-14

**CHINLE CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION DIRECTS THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL'S HEALTH, EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE, NAA'BIK'IYATI' COMMITTEE AND TO ARIZONA U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN ANN KIRKPATRICK TO INQUIRE TO U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS-READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICES AS TO WHY CHINLE VET CENTER IS WITHOUT AN OFFICE AND NOT PROVIDING MUCH NEEDED VETERANS SERVICES SINCE NOVEMBER 2013.**

**WHEREAS:**

1. The Chinle Chapter Veterans Organization (CCVO) was established and certified by Chinle Chapter in the early 1980s as one of the oldest Navajo veteran organizations. And CCVO was established as a local veterans group representing around 500-600 veterans; and
2. CCVO has always advocated on behalf of Navajo Nation veterans, eligible spouses and dependents, widow(er)s and Gold Star Mothers, including active duty military personnel and non-Navajo veterans; and
3. For forty-to-fifty years, veterans on Navajo Nation were being neglected, forgotten and underserved by Federal Government (VA) and State of NM, AZ, UT on veterans benefits and services; and
4. Due to lack of veteran services on AZ side of Navajo Nation, veterans had to traveled anywhere from five to eight hours to receive medical and mental health care services at VAMC in Albuquerque, NM, Prescotts, Phoenix, Tucson, AZ and Salt Lake City, Utah and over two to three hours (one-way) travel to nearest Vet Center to receive services; and
5. Finally, in August of 1997, a Chinle Vet Center was opened under U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA)-Readjustment Counseling Services with a Counselor and office manager. Veterans were finally receiving much needed services like Counseling for PTSD or any other military related problems, and other psycho-social services, providing outreach services to other community (Chapters) area on Navajo Nation, etc; and
6. Around 2011-2012, a Mobile Vet Center was assigned to Chinle Vet Center for outreach services and within a month it was taken and re-assigned to another area with fewer veterans; and
7. In November 2013, the Chinle Vet Center was asked to vacate their deteriorating office building due to being unsafe. Vet Center occupied the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) building since August of 1997. BIA neglected to upkeep the building for that long, although requests were submitted for repairs and fixes; and
8. The two Vet Center staff was moved to Chinle Hospital premises for short period and then to a small Motel room for about 11 months with (no) office equipments and (no) records/file to work with, and presently they're working out of their vehicles. The USDVA-Readjustment Counseling Services through their Regional Denver Office failed to assist the staff for another office space for last 13 months; and
9. CCVO and the veterans are asking the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington DC through AZ Congressional Representative why Chinle Vet Center has been without an office and not providing much needed services since November 2013.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The Chinle Chapter Veterans Organization, hereby, directs the Navajo Nation Council's Health, Education and Human Services Committee, Naa'bik'iyati' Committee and to Arizona U.S. Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick to inquire to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-Readjustment

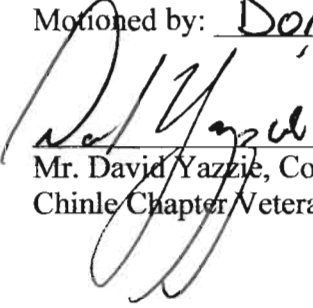
Counseling Services as to why Chinle Vet Center is without an office and not providing much needed veterans services since November 2013; and

2. With around 10,000 veterans on Navajo Nation it is the only veterans services available under USDVA for combat Navajo and Non-Navajo Veterans and their family, as well as, returning discharged veterans; and
3. Re-assigned back the Mobile Vet Center to Chinle for outreach services to the (16) Chapter Communities under Central Navajo Agency, as well as, providing services to other areas in Fort Defiance Agency, and Tuba City Agency and to Hopi Nation.

## CERTIFICATION

I, hereby, certify that the foregoing support Resolution was duly considered by the Chinle Chapter Veterans Organization at a duly called meeting at which a quorum was present and same was passed with a vote of 61 in favor, 0 opposed and 2 abstained. On this 11<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2014.

Motioned by: DONALD BIZADI      Seconded by: JOYCE NEZ

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. David Yazzie, Commander  
Chinle Chapter Veterans Organization

**ELBERT "EL" R. WHEELER**

One Chapter House Road  
c/o Unit Box #85  
Round Rock, Arizona 86547

December 15, 2014

Mr. Jonathan Hale, Chairman  
Health, Education and Human Services Committee  
The NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL  
Window Rock, Navajo Nation, Arizona 86547

Shi-Naatannii, Honorable Hale:

I am requesting your committee's assistance on the attached Support Resolution passed by Chinle Chapter Veterans Organization on December 11, 2014. The Resolution is self-explanatory.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through their Readjustment Counseling Services (USDVA-RCS) is neglecting their commitment to the Navajo Nation Veterans. Since August 1997, Chinle Vet Center has been providing counseling service to our veterans and their family for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injuries, re-adjustment counseling for returning veterans, and others services.

Since November 2013, Chinle Vet Center closed their doors due to unsafe building they were occupying for the last 17 years. The three center employees do not have an office for the last 13 months. USDVA-RCS failed to assist their employees for a new office. We (the veterans) considered this a disservice to our veterans on Navajo.

Your Committee's support with a Committee Legislation would be in order to Naa'bik'iyati' Committee and on to AZ Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick in Washington DC, so she can look in to with USDVA-RCS why Chinle Vet Center staff don't have an office and working out of their vehicle for last 13 months.

You're welcome to contact me if you have any question.



Elbert "EL" R. Wheeler  
A Concerned Veterans