



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

**Presentation to the
Military and Veterans Affairs Committee**

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Eastern Agency, Navajo Nation Veterans Administration

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Overview: Summary of issues within the Eastern Agency Navajo Nation Veterans Administration, which consist of 31 Chapters with a total of 29,328 voters, of which there are at least 2,270 Veterans and the Northern Agency Veterans Administration that consist of 19 Chapters with about 24,244 voters of which there are about 10,185 Navajo Veterans.

Navajo Nation Veterans Administration

Before WWII, the Navajo Tribal Council pledged its loyalty to aid and defend the United States Government. On June 12, 1942, Navajo Tribal Council acknowledged Armed Forces induction of Navajos for military services. In 1971, the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs (DNVA) was established. The DNVA has recently been superseded by the Veterans Act and is now the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration (NNVA) in order to address the numerous issues that Navajo Veterans are facing, such as:

1. Veteran's Benefits and Claims Counselor
 - Training and accreditation thru New Mexico Dept. of Veterans Services for the NNVA VSO's
 - Benefits and claims filing capabilities at the agency office alleviates travel time and language barriers
 - An MOU was signed between NN and ADVS to provide training for VSO and to reach more Navajo Veterans in AZ on June 24th
 - Eastern Agency Navajo Nation has 437 Vietnam Veterans; these Veterans require more VBC services as well as the current generation of discharged service members.
2. Housing
 - New Construction, We are only providing 10 homes a year on a four year program and we are currently still in the second year. 10 homes a year is not making a dent in the housing needs. Critical need of a licensed electrician.



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- Rehabilitation of current home to bring them up to ADA standards, many Veterans need ramps and to widen all doors of the home, and walk-in showers. Current focus is new construction, no funds set aside to do rehabs.
 - Homelessness is prevalent among Veterans of all walks of life, Shelters can be set up during winter to provide for them and to get information to them and from them
3. Health care services
- Transportation to clinics: Gallup or ABQ
 - Some Navajo Veterans lack transportation, lack funds, and appointments take too long.
 - Those that are entitled to travel pay are not aware of the process and payment is most often done via electronic funds transfer (EFT) and some Navajo Veterans do not have a bank account for automatic deposits.
 - NM should qualify for the Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG) from the VA
 - We have traditionalist who required traditional healers i.e. medicine man/woman and/or traditional ceremonies. The budget allocations we get, often times do not last the whole year.
 - PTSD, other mental illness and addictions are prevalent on the NN, but there is no treatment clinic or counseling available within the reservation. They are available in the border towns but it comes back to transportation.
 - Female Veterans health care access
4. Existing Facilities Improvement
- For improvement of the Crownpoint Agency Office parking lot, we had a Korean War Veteran who fell due to the gravel lot; a paved parking lot will exponentially improve accessibility to the office for Veterans who are using walkers, canes and wheelchairs.
 - Eastern and Northern Agency office requires new office equipment and assistance in operating cost, i.e. funds for travel for training, pay contractual obligations



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5. Education, On-the-job training and employment
 - Memorandum of support for Workforce Development to create a Veteran employment liaison located in Grants or Gallup

 6. Navajo Code Talkers recognition
 - Navajo Nation holiday is currently the only recognition for these warriors on August 14th, Request recognition from the state of New Mexico.

 7. Senior Centers
 - Currently, the centers feed about 75% of the EA Veterans population, and the centers have been told that they are running out of foods and or funds to continue operating.

 - Senior Centers often times is the only place for Veterans to get a meal and to socialize.

Conclusion: The Navajo Nation Veterans Administration will continue to provide services to Navajo Veterans, but there are many other services that can be implemented like the Benefits and claims counselor training and certification for the VSO and the facilities improvement that will benefit the more elderly Veterans. The Navajo Nation Veterans Administration thank you for the time to bring forth some issues of our Nation and for advocated on the behalf of Military and Veterans.