

DECLARATION OF NAVAJO VOTER OBJECTIONS TO ONGD'S PROPOSED GOVERNMENT REFORM PROPOSAL

Monday, January 27, 2026

We have a history of foreign governments making laws and structures and imposing them on us. We, the Diné and other indigenous people did not have the opportunity to participate in the development of these laws and structures.

We are facing a new and most urgent threat: a Navajo government reform proposal drafted and advanced by the Office of Navajo Government Development (ONGD) without public input, which will change Diné life and silence voices of the Diné people for generations to come.

Since July 2025, ONGD has been presenting, largely unannounced and with few attendees, a 108 page 45,000 word proposal for Navajo government reform. In recent months half the proposal has been removed from ONGD's site and the ONGD director keeps changing the draft.

The proposal creates a bureaucratic framework that would treat our land as a commodity for business, and bypass the fundamental necessity of Navajo consent in matters of our energy, water, and land use. It would make the Navajo government even more unworkable by rigidly separating current branches and creating a fourth branch. It ends all pretense at building a systemic and structural future that will embody, and be supportive of, traditional concepts of governance and the Diné Life Way.

The proposal which is entitled "**Diyin Nohookáá Diné'é Bi Beehaz'aanii Bitsí Siléí Sa'ah Naghái Bik'eh Hózhóón - Collective Will,**" misappropriates sacred Diné concepts and terminology to facilitate land alienation, corporate municipalization, commodification of Mother Earth, and centralized fiscal monitoring. ONGD strips them of their traditional context and uses them to support Western, corporate-aligned restructuring.

ONGD is using our own language to remove our protections and to deceive and confuse our people.

The proposal claims the people have "inherent" power, yet does not give any power to the people

to pursue governance and life ways that are self-determined. Rather than innovate for true Indigenous sovereignty for true self-determination and resilience, it makes us permanently subordinate to the very systems that have sought our cultural destruction.

While making empty promises for home rule, it severs local governments from central support and denies them control over the very land and resources they need to serve the public. It proposes an "Investor Bill of Rights" that would treat our lands, water, and power as mere appendages for investor gain. It pursues conveyance of our trust land to private hands.

The proposed new bureaucracies threaten to further burden an already overburdened bureaucracy. Critically, **the proposal lacks clear governmental obligations to provide services to the people.** It shifts burdens onto the people, framing security, education, and basic services as individual responsibilities rather than fundamental government duties.

The stated intent is to place the proposal on the November 2026 ballot as a single YES or NO referendum question. The single issue rule used by the Navajo Nation Election Board in (BOESS-070-14 (2014) requires YES/NO referendums to be "one subject matter," not simply applied to hundreds upon hundreds of subject matter reforms people cannot even examine, including creating a Fourth Branch and replacing the **Navajo Bill of Rights and Diné Fundamental Law.**

In 2018, the Naa'bik'iyati' Committee of the Navajo Nation Council adopted the standards set forth in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to guide the development of Navajo Nation law and ensure free, prior and informed consent in matters affecting our rights and our lands. (NABIN-39-18). The proposal violates these rights.

We therefore remind the Navajo Nation Council that it is now time to support and facilitate the efforts of the people to enforce the Council's declared policies that the government be established by the people themselves.

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