

CALL TO CHAPTERS

To: All Navajo Nation Chapters

From: Herb Yazzie, *retired Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation*
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**Added 2/25 by request: Johnny Johnson, Eastern Agency Executive Council President, Standing Rock Chapter President*

Date: February 5, 2026

Subject: ONGD Reform Proposal Will Supersede LGA

Chapters may not be aware that the Office of Navajo Government Development (ONGD) has been presenting a government reform proposal since July, 2025, and has set a March 6, 2026 deadline for public input, following which ONGD has repeatedly stated its intent to place the proposal directly on the Nov 3 ballot as a referendum question. **Normally a public comment period would begin only after legislation is sponsored and found legally sufficient in the 164 review process. In this extraordinary instance, ONGD claims it has authority to bypass the review process. However dubious its claims of authority may be, the March 6 deadline for public input ought to be met by Chapter responses.**

The ONGD reform proposal is a 108 page document that seeks to restructure all aspects of Navajo Nation government. Only 48 pages of the 108 page document is available for public examination. Article XVIII of the proposal (*Local Rule and Governance Entities*) purports to “supersede” the Local Governance Act in its entirety. Very likely, chapters are not aware the proposal will replace the LGA, as no chapter hearings have been convened. There has been no proper briefing of its full text.

The plan appears to be that chapters will be regionalized, perform unfunded government services, and also be autonomous business entities with no access to Navajo Nation resources.

The proposal calls itself *Diyin Nohookáá Dine’é Bi Beehaz’áanii Bitsí Siléí—the Collective Will* but contains nothing but man-made law, structured towards creation of a Fourth Branch and privatization of all tribe-related economic functions. It seeks to replace the Navajo Bill of Rights and Diné Fundamental Law without consulting our traditional knowledge keepers. It establishes itself as *bitsé silei, Diné beehaz’áanii*, and will be the Supreme Law of the Navajo Nation.

We are standing at a crossroads, as a people, during a critical time of global shifts and national insecurity, especially for our people. There is anxiety about securing the future, and some wish to ensure our survival as a Nation through “monetization” of our water and land resources. To that end, land is termed a “commodity for intra-Navajo trade and economic development.” Privatization of our use and occupancy rights is required “as soon as possible.” It provides that

the Diné people have pre-consented that commercial development and land monetization are higher priorities than agriculture and cultural uses. Meanwhile, the world outside the reservation is rapidly pivoting, even this week, away from exorbitant energy-intensive projects.

On February 1, news emerged that major banks are pulling back from AI investment due to “diminishing returns,” and that one quarter of data centers will sit empty or uncompleted due to lack of investment, energy, and water. Nevertheless, off-reservation jobs are threatened by AI, and our children will return expecting their Nation to uphold their identity, and their communities to sustain them. The proposal lacks any governmental service obligations to our people. Leadership must explain the consequences of this plan that clearly breaks the connection between the tribal sovereign, the land, and the people as a whole.

The path we take determines whether our grandchildren will have the value of their language and a principled, free and local life that includes communal land stewardship. The BIA and our own leadership have prevented any semblance of local power over resources and are now asking for more power and more silencing of communities.

On July 14, 2025, the Commission of Navajo Government Development (CNGD) authorized this draft to be offered to the Navajo people “for further development” with finalization “after necessary review.” CNGD-07-01-25. They gave no authorization to go directly to a referendum ballot or to bypass the 164 process as has been repeatedly asserted by ONGD in its poorly attended presentations which have been unannounced but for facebook.

ONGD must make the full document available to the public, extend the March 6, 2026 deadline, conduct chapter hearings and adhere to the section 164 process. ONGD must clarify the impact on the Local Governance Act and provide an opportunity to be heard by the Navajo People and not rush this important matter into law.

Chapters must make their proper and timely objections before it is too late.

For a marked-up copy of ONGD’s proposal: Go to Diné Nihi Keyah Project <https://dinelanduse.org/> or click <https://dinelanduse.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/markup-ONGD.pdf>