



# THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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## Navajo voters reduce Navajo Nation Council to 24 delegates, give line item veto to President to rein in excessive spending

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo voters went to the polls in a historic election Tuesday to overwhelmingly support reducing the Navajo Nation Council to 24 members and giving the President of the Navajo Nation line item veto authority.

and paper tallies were taped to the walls and organized by agencies. President and Mrs. Shirley walked around the room to look at each agency and chapter result.

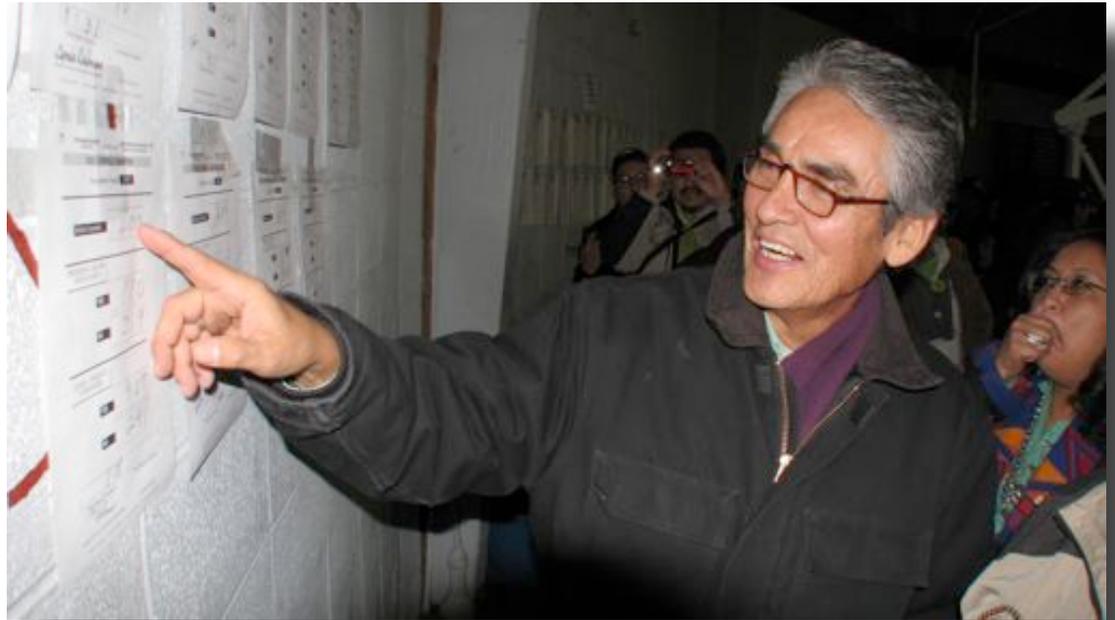
The unofficial results from 110 chapters showed 25,206 yes votes to 16,166 no votes to reduce the council, and 24,489 yes votes to 16,893 no votes to approve the line item veto.

By percentage, the tally was 61 to 39 percent to reduce the council, and 59 to 41 percent for line item veto.

“It really makes my heart glad,” Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., told the Associated Press by phone from the Navajo Sports Center where vote tallies were being phoned in from chapter voting precincts. “I don’t think there’s going to be any challenges. They could try. But, you know, when the people speak, that is it.”

President Shirley, First Lady Vikki Shirley and their children arrived at the sports center at about 9 p.m. with about 90 chapters having reported in, and after having attended their son’s basketball game in Chinle. The President was greeted with cheers from about 250 people there.

As the tallies came in after polls closed at 7 p.m., the cumulative results appeared on large computer monitors



*Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., and First Lady Vikki Shirley look over the election results in the Navajo Sports Center and are happy with how voters strongly supported the two initiatives that made history for the first time.*

“This is history in the making,” he told the AP. “I feel like I have helped to write the Navajo Nation history at this juncture, and that makes me very glad, very happy, not so much for myself. Certainly I’m a part of it, but more for my people. I feel like we’ve gone where we should have been a long time ago.”

The President said the election results have shown the Nation’s leadership that the people do believe it is their government.

“The leadership is going to know that the people mean business,” he said. “It is their government.”

“The government belonged to the people all along,” he continued. “It is their government and we need to respect it. The resources that are there belong to the people, and now the people have spoken to us. We need to respect it.”

President Shirley said this election and these initiatives are just a start toward reforming the Navajo government. Next to come, he said, could be a more comprehensive government reform, and perhaps more elective offices such as attorney general and Navajo Nation treasurer, both whom could not be threatened with firing by the council.

Now that the people have approved reducing the council, the next step in the process is to develop a reapportionment plan for 24 delegates, he said. That will be done by the Navajo Election Administration, approved by the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors and forwarded to the current council to debate and approve.

“This is a long time coming, and now they’ve proven it,” the President said. “The people wanted government reform. They started it. I think there’s going to be comprehensive government reform in some fashion.”

The President told the Navajo Times that there wasn’t one single factor that swayed voters to support the initiatives but said he believed they were persuaded of the need for it over time with news reports of the mismanagement of council delegates’ discretionary funding, council committee trips to Las Vegas, motorcycle trips to Washington, D.C. that produced little results, gold rings for delegates, and, most recently, placing the President on leave without giving any reasons.

“I think that pushed a lot of people to the 24,” he said. “So it’s just a lot of things coming together, and this is the result.”

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