



NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT JOE SHIRLEY, JR.'S STATEMENT ON TODAY'S NAVAJO NATION SUPREME COURT DECISION *JULY 9, 2010*

Yá'át'éé'eb. Today the Navajo Nation Supreme Court affirmed the June 25 ruling of the Office of Hearing and Appeals to uphold the Navajo Election Administration's disqualification of my candidacy. Certainly, I am disappointed. I believe this is a decision against the People. But being that this is our government, and having respect for the government, for the People, I respect the decision of our Supreme Court justices.

The Supreme Court ruled that the Presidential term limit law complies with *Diné Bi Beebaz'áanii*. The justices said that although the People have a right to participate in their government, the right to choose their own leader, and the right to form the structure of their own government, none of these rights are absolute and may require a restriction on one or another.

In answer to a question, the justices also took the NEA at its word that the Presidential term limit law is not a lifetime ban, although that is how the language of the law reads.

I do not believe a term limit for just the President of the Navajo Nation is a good law. It's not our People's law. It is a concept and law that was put onto us from the outside, and I'd like to see it erased. The People were never given an opportunity to vote on the Title II amendments as the Council promised them, and so were never given an opportunity to decide on a term limit for the President. If our leaders continue to work on government reform, this is one of the laws that needs to be carefully looked at. In the laws given to us by the Holy Ones, there is no term limit for leaders.

Right now, it is my hope that the government reform we started will not come to an end. Government reform is far from done. There is a lot more that needs to happen to stabilize our government. I hope that whoever the leadership is going to be will continue to work on it, and get it done. We need to be more prudent in the use of the People's money, bring accountability to the government, and make the government more efficient and more effective.

In 1989, we knew that Title II was a temporary law and wasn't anything permanent that we were putting into place. It was always the intention that the People would have an opportunity for discussion, for debate, to have their say about the Title II amendments, and ultimately to ratify these laws. As it were, 20 years later, the People still have not had their input into Title II because

subsequent Councils failed to uphold the promise made to the People about their government. That's very unfortunate, and I don't think it's doing right by the People. Should government reform continue, I hope this is addressed.

For me, it has always been about working on behalf of the People, and our challenge of the term limit law was no different. It was on behalf of the People, at their urging, that I went forward and filed to run for a third term and challenge the term limit law. There was a decision against us at the Office of Hearings and Appeals level, so we appealed it, and today we've gotten the answer to our challenge from the highest court on Navajoland.

My staff, the people who supported our effort, the First Lady and I will remain positive and remember that there are many good things out there to come for all of us. Reporters ask me what is next, and I tell them there are still people in need and there is still work to be completed in this term of office. Now is the time to give thought to this decision, and to remember that tomorrow is promised to no one.

DR. JOE SHIRLEY, JR., PRESIDENT
THE NAVAJO NATION