



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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CONTACT: GEORGE HARDEEN
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
OFFICE – 928-871-7917
CELL – 928-309-8532
pressoffice@opvp.org

Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., vetoes ‘Decentralization Project’ as duplication of whole divisions, fostering separatist approach

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., today vetoed the proposed “Western Navajo Agency Decentralization Pilot Project” because it is unknown to the People, would duplicate existing services, would drain financial resources from other agencies, and would foster a separatist approach to governing.

“It is irrefutable that this resolution fosters a separatist approach to governing and acquiring governmental services that are already provided for under the current system,” President Shirley wrote in his veto message to Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan.

“Separatist movements are most often launched because of emotional resentment, resistance, the desire to gain politically from intergroup conflict, and a desire to destabilize and fragment an existing government,” he said. “It is not unreasonable to see these motivations at work through legislation recently considered and/or passed by the Council because of the government reform initiatives passed by the People.”

The President said the legislation lacks sufficient information about the impacts it would have on the entire Navajo Nation.

“This legislation is completely unknown to the people it would directly affect,” he said. “This is legislation that the people of the Western Agency have not sought, know nothing about, and do not need.”

He said that other than a presentation at a Western Agency Council meeting, there have been no public

hearings or meetings to introduce this concept to the people.

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– Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.

“Even a simple Google search of ‘Western Navajo Agency Decentralization Pilot Project’ produces no news stories, no analysis, no newspaper letters to the editor, nor anything that would indicate that the public is vaguely aware of this legislation other than Legislative Branch press releases,” he said.

He said the huge costs associated with replicating whole divisions, departments and services that are already provided is unknown, have had no review or analysis by the Office of Management and Budget, and could potentially jeopardize existing federal grant agreements.

Most of the programs identified in the pilot project are federally-funded and administered by the respective Executive Branch division directors, he said.

However, nowhere in the agreements executed by the Navajo Nation and the federal agency is it recognized that oversight of such programs would be by an elected Western Agency manager as this legislation proposes.

He said the resolution lacks information about the relationship the decentralization project would have with existing governmental operations of the three branches of government, and makes no attempt to address the fiscal impact it would have on the services provided in the other Navajo agencies.

He said that rather than assist chapters gain local governance certification, the legislation would undermine the purpose of the Local Governance Act and would shift critical resources from other agencies.

“Most certainly it would decrease funding to those agencies and, consequently, the services now provided in

the other agencies in order to subsidize the significant costs of duplicating departments and services now being provided in the Western Agency,” he said.

If this resolution and subsequent plan is implemented, it would divide the Navajo Nation, he said.

“It would cause damage to the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation government, create funding uncertainties, and result in serious conflicts with existing Executive and Judicial Branch service providers,” the President said.

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