



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., vetoes supplemental appropriation after \$1 million request balloons to \$17 million for non-emergencies

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., today vetoed a \$17 million appropriation resolution after a request for \$1 million for the Navajo Nation's weather-related state of emergency had ballooned for non-emergency purposes.

In his veto message to Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan, the President said he requested \$1 million to help address weather-related emergency throughout the Navajo Nation.

"However, with one amendment, requests to fund projects, which were not emergencies, ballooned to an amount of over \$17 million, and added on as riders to the emergency legislation," he said.

The President said legislation to address funding for national emergencies needs to stand alone without amendments added for funding from the undesignated, unreserved fund.

The legislation originally sought \$1 million to assist in Operation Gray Clay. On Jan. 28, the President and the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management declared a weather-related state of emergency, which remains in effect.

That same day, the council approved an appropriation of more than \$2.7 million to give each Navajo community \$25,000 to assist with the weather emergency, whether they were impacted or not. Only eight of the 110 Navajo chapters had declared emergencies.

The council met in special session on Feb. 26, in part to consider the President's request for funding to deal with the continuing emergency. However, amendments to his request were added that sought funding for scholarships, housing, veterans' assistance, and public employment projects.

The President said he is concerned that the council neglected to prioritize spending through the regular budget process, and sought to use funding from the Navajo Nation's Grant Reserve Fund.

"With one amendment, requests to fund projects, which were not emergencies, ballooned to an amount of over \$17 million."

– Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.

"Using funds for purposes other than those intended, as this resolution authorizes, sets a dangerous precedent and leaves other funds vulnerable," he said.

The reserve fund was agreed to among the Branch Chiefs and approved by the Navajo Nation Council during the FY 2008 budget process, he said. It is intended to reimburse expenses for capital projects that will help improve the standard of living and quality of life for many Navajo people, in addition to providing essential governmental services."

The President added that he was "extremely concerned about the constant waiver of Navajo law."

He noted the spending legislation waived the Navajo Nation Appropriations Act and other Navajo laws.

"This practice creates a system of government and body of law that cannot be relied upon and reflects badly on the Navajo Nation's system of government," he said. "We need to refrain from waiving Navajo law, and instead examine and determine which provisions of the law need to be amended or repealed if, in fact, our current body of law is not workable."

The President said he supports Navajo chapters and is aware of their many needs, but that he understands automatic carryover of funds has left many of them with substantial reserves.

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