



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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OPVP stands by statement that Council delegates sought to discredit Window Rock District Court judge for decision

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Speaker’s Office reported Monday that the Office of the President “falsely accuses Council Delegates of discrediting Judge Perry for extending TRO.”

The Speaker’s Office termed an OPVP news release, titled “Council delegates attempt to discredit Navajo judge for decision in order to raise doubt in public’s mind about tribal court” a “political tactic.”

In a May 10 news release, the Speaker’s Office quotes both Judiciary Committee Chairman Kee Allen Begay and Council Delegate Young Jeff Tom as questioning a Window Rock District Court judge’s judicial ability, accusing her of timidity and an inability to do her job, saying she displayed doubt in her own decision-making, and “seriously question her ability to interpret what the law says.”

Paradoxically, the Speaker’s Office denied that Mr. Begay “has a personal or political agenda” even though his comments were made as an individual without the backing of his committee.

The May 10 news release quotes Mr. Begay and Delegate Young Jeff Tom and states:

www.navajo.org/News%20Releases/Joshua%20Lavar%20Butler/May10/100511_Response_to_TRO_extension.pdf

- “Begay and Tom’s intent is to bring attention to the matter in hopes the Navajo people will question the judge and the judicial system.”
- “ She is discriminating.” – Young Jeff Tom
- “Tom suggested if the judge cannot make a decision, she should consider disqualifying herself from this case.”
- “I believe our court system is being abused and our judges are being persuaded to be on one side.”
– Kee Allen Begay

- “The judge is not doing her job and he (Kee Allen Begay) questioned her ability to render a decision.”
- “Maybe the judge does not have the ability to make a ruling or interpret the law,” – Kee Allen Begay

OPVP stands by its statement that these comments constitute criticism with the intention of discrediting Window Rock District Court Judge Carol Perry.

- “She is displaying doubt in her decision-making abilities, and we must seriously question her ability to interpret what the law says.” – Kee Allen Begay

Neither Mr. Begay, Mr. Tom nor the Speaker’s Office have acknowledged that it was the attorney from the Office of Legislative Counsel who asked Judge Perry to stay the May 7 TRO hearing – which they objected to.

In a related item, Council Delegate Thomas Walker, Jr., has denied that his recent proposal to reform the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch through the election of judges is retaliation against judges for recent decisions the Council has not liked.

However, Mr. Begay is quoted in Monday’s news release as saying, “For the past seven years, there was no problem with the court system until recently.”

OPVP stands by its statement that these comments constitute criticism with the intention of discrediting a judge on the basis of a single decision these delegates disagree with, calls into question a conflict of interest for the Judiciary Committee chairman, and raises a question of whether the Council soon plans to target judges and justices for political reasons.

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