



# THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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## Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., schedules agency meetings to present redistricting plan for 24 delegates to the voters

*Supreme Court orders President to present plan to NBOES by June 11, NBOES ordered to adopt plan by June 18, NEA to resume candidate filing*

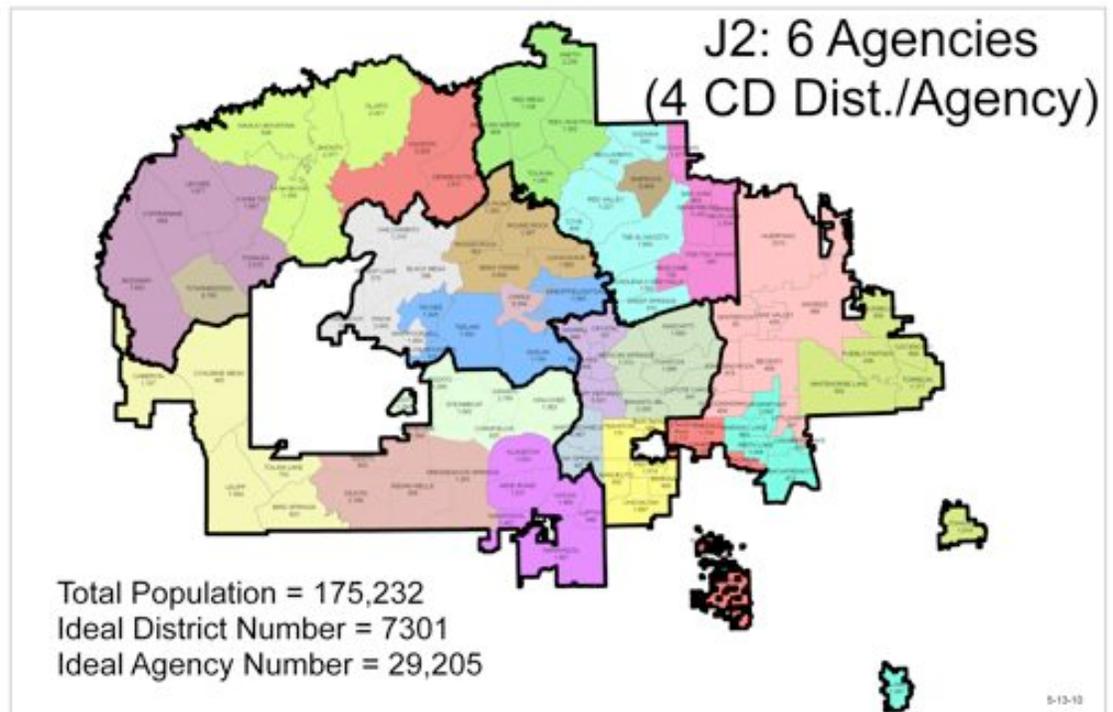
**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., has scheduled six meetings throughout the Navajo Nation to brief the public on a proposed redistricting plan for a Navajo Nation Council of 24 delegates.

On Friday, the Navajo Nation Supreme Court ordered that the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors certify the results of the Dec. 15, 2009, initiative special election in which Navajo voters supported reducing the Council to 24 delegates and authorized a Presidential line item veto for spending legislation.

Because of delays and inaction by the NBOES and the Navajo Nation Council to develop a reapportionment plan, the Court also ordered that President Shirley present a plan to NBOES by June 11, and that NBOES approve it by June 18.

“We find that the events leading up to the Special Election show that the reapportionment plan that was expressed through the Initiative language failed to be timely approved because of inaction by the NBOES, and action and inaction by the Council, which has challenged this Initiative, or assisted in challenges, at every step, even unlawfully removing the President from his duties at

the very moment an alternative plan from the President was due,” the Court said.



Immediately following the Dec. 15 special election, President Shirley directed staff to prepare redistricting plans for presentation to the public.

Some 20 meetings were held across the Nation where a dozen plans were presented. The plans incorporated various criteria, data and recommendations from the public.

A final plan to be recommended – named “J2” was completed on May 13.

"I want to share with the Navajo Nation Council and the Board of Election Supervisors that the redistricting has already been worked on and the map has been readied," the President said in a statement Friday following the announcement of the Court's decision.

"All it needs is to get adopted and put in place so we can move on with the elections," he said. "There is no need to belabor the election processes anymore. We have already wasted enough time and the People are anxiously waiting to move on."

Beginning Thursday, President Shirley has scheduled five agency meetings – and a sixth at the proposed new sixth Southwest Agency in Dilkon – to further familiarize the public with the plan.

The schedule of meetings is:

- Thursday, June 3, 1 to 5 p.m. at the Eastern Agency at the Standing Rock Chapter.
- Thursday, June 3, 1 to 5 p.m. at the Chinle Agency at the Chinle Community Center.
- Thursday, June 3, 1 to 5 p.m. at the Fort Defiance Agency at Nakai Hall in the Window Rock Fairgrounds (although this is subject to change).
- Friday, June 4, 9 a.m. to noon at the Northern Agency at the Shiprock Chapter.
- Times and locations for meetings at the Western Agency in Tuba City and the Southwest Agency in Dilkon will be announced.

The Supreme Court found that a redistricting plan remains a mandate from the People as a result of the Dec. 15 special election. However, it noted that NBOES failed to certify the election results and neither it nor the Council took any action to prepare a reapportionment plan.

"The NBOES and the Council were given ample opportunity to develop and approve the plan but failed to do so," the Court said. "We find that the remaining two months is woefully inadequate to develop, debate and approve a reapportionment plan from the many that will

be offered. The People's government must comply with the mandate issued by the People."

Consequently, the Court ordered that "the President shall present a reapportionment plan that have been discussed at community meetings by June 11, 2010, and the NBOES shall approve the reapportionment plan by June 18, 2010."

A news release from Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan office Friday reported that the Speaker and Council delegates will respect the Court's decision.

"It is the People's government and there is nothing wrong with their votes," Speaker Morgan said. "There are times when the People vote on new initiatives and things change accordingly such as at the chapter level when a new chapter president is selected – there is a new direction, a new vision."

Many Farms Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay said the decisions of the Court have to be respected.

"The Court made the decision and I have to respect it," he said. "I know my chapter voted in favor of the reduction and the line item veto; 2-1 votes on the reduction."

In its section on the reapportionment plan, the Court ordered "that the Council may not use its power to frustrate the will of the People."

It said that the Council "possesses no independent authority to alter or abolish its clear deference to the Navajo People."

It noted, as President Shirley has previously stated, that the result of the Dec. 15 special election means that the Navajo People themselves have enacted new law for the Navajo Nation through the initiative process.

"The NBOES, therefore, shall immediately proceed with the 2010 election of a 24 member Navajo Nation Council," the Court said. "Twenty-four delegates shall be seated on January 11, 2011. The NBOES and the (Navajo Election Administration) shall proceed with the 2010 election in accordance with this decision."

It said the NEA could resume with the candidate filing process which will end on June 11.