



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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OPVP Chief of Staff Patrick Sandoval says allegation of interference is without basis, designed to have office appear acting in bad faith

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The chief of staff in the Office of the President and Vice President said Friday that allegations that OPVP staff are interfering with the Navajo Election Administration are without basis and designed to have it appear the office is working in bad faith.

On Oct. 5, Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan wrote to Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., to ask that the President's staff cease interfering with the NEA. The memo states that the Speaker's office has received complaints from the NEA alleging OPVP staff "have attempted to use their apparent authority to improperly influence" the NEA.

"There is no undue influence from anybody from the OPVP," said Patrick Sandoval, OPVP chief of staff. "We have stated on several occasions to Navajo Election Administration Director Edison Wauneka and the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors that they will dictate how this election will be conducted."

Mr. Sandoval said the accusation is an example of Mr. Wauneka trying to shift responsibility for his not performing his job onto the President's staff, and comes as no surprise from the Speaker's office which has opposed holding a government reform initiative election for the past 16 months.

"Mr. Wauneka knew as early as June 25, when Judge Carol Perry ordered that an election take place, that he should plan for this election but he didn't," Mr. Sandoval said. "He knew when he developed his FY2010 budget that there was a likelihood his office would have to conduct this special election but he neglected to plan for it."

On Sept. 18, when the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors set the Dec. 15 government reform special election date, Mr. Wauneka said he needed sufficient funds by Oct. 23 to pay for the election. On the same day,

President Shirley appeared before the board to say that the Executive Branch would be willing to pay \$190,000 of the election expense.

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– Patrick Sandoval, OPVP chief of staff

Because the President's pledge of \$190,000 showed that a portion of the resources would be available, the board was amenable, and that is the reason it finally set the election date, Mr. Sandoval said.

Additionally, the board said at the time that it needed a demonstration of sufficient resources to conduct the election. So on Oct. 8, OPVP Legal Counsel Michelle Dotson provided the board with a detailed plan for the Executive Branch to pay for the entire election.

"The board was agreeable to the pledge of the Executive Branch paying for the election but all decisions regarding the procurement of services, the procurement list, the expenses and the actual budget was to be controlled and developed by the NEA," Mr. Sandoval said.

"In trying to make this understood to Mr. Wauneka, he interpreted it as interference," Mr. Sandoval said. "The

only thing the Executive Branch is willing to do is to help pay the cost. The NEA makes all of the decisions with what the ballot says, who prints the ballot, and all the educational materials including the media, the radio. We're just merely paying the bill."

Mr. Sandoval said the latest of several indicators that the Speaker's office hopes to prevent the election from happening is the lack of response to the President's request to Speaker Morgan to sponsor legislation for a supplemental appropriation to fund the special election. He said OPVP has heard nothing from the Speaker about whether he would consider it or not.

Likewise, he said, Mr. Wauneka has made no attempt to seek sponsorship of legislation for a supplement appropriation to conduct the election.

"The Legislative Branch is not making any effort whatsoever to identify a source of funds to pay for this election," Mr. Sandoval said. "The only individual who has done anything to help is Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie."

"We feel strongly that the government has a duty and a responsibility to pay for the election," Mr. Sandoval said. "The Navajo Nation Supreme Court has said it is a government responsibility. The resources coming from the Executive Branch are government resources, and the people are calling for this election. We are merely trying to facilitate this process."

He said OPVP has agreed to go to the oversight committees to obtain permission to allow that expenses to be paid for by the Executive Branch. That action was confirmed by the Budget & Finance Committee on Wednesday, he said.

He said he is hopeful that the Council's Intergovernmental Relations Committee will approve a memorandum of agreement soon for the Executive Branch to pay for the election, but noted that Speaker Morgan chairs that committee.

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