



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaker Morgan clarifies statement and position on comprehensive government reform

"The focus should be on government reform, not just on downsizing the size of the Navajo Nation Council — this should be done in the spirit of overall reform." — Lawrence T. Morgan, Navajo Nation Council Speaker

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan issued a statement today to clarify recent media reports that he supports the reduction of the Navajo Nation Council — impressions of support of the reduction.

Speaker Morgan said that "the focus should be on comprehensive government reform, not just on downsizing the size of the Navajo Nation Council — this should be done in the spirit of overall reform as the main objective."

It is a fact that Speaker Morgan and Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. have agreed to work together on government reform for the Navajo Nation and in an effort to resolve differences using the Navajo concept of K'e.

Speaker Morgan and President Shirley announced a comprehensive government reform plan that will be designed to overhaul the entire Navajo Nation government — which includes the executive branch, the legislative branch and the judicial branch. This plan does not include just the reduction of council delegates on the Council.

During a press conference held on Wednesday, Aug. 12, the two Navajo Nation leaders presented their comprehensive reform plan to the public. This plan entails a convention that is planned to amend certain sections of Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code.

A working group will draft a comprehensive government reform document and Navajo voters will eventually consider the plan by voting on it. There is no official title for the plan, but it could possibly be considered a constitution or possibly a charter.

Speaker Morgan said that he will continue to assert and maintain the interest of the Navajo people — a duty that remains paramount in his efforts to begin comprehensive government reform — amidst the perceptions of previous reform efforts.

"This is the Navajo people's government and they must be represented," Speaker Morgan said. "I support the spirit of comprehensive government reform — which is an effort to address structural concerns and issues that hinder the work of our Nation."



Lawrence T. Morgan
Speaker of the 21st Navajo Nation Council

"As we move forward into the future of our Nation, we, the leaders of the Navajo Nation must acknowledge these structural deficiencies, all while protecting the rights of our Diné people," Speaker Morgan explained. "I will stand by our Navajo Nation Council in their efforts to address issues of comprehensive government reform — an issue that has always been on my political platform."

Speaker Morgan further explained that the Council's approach — which he supports — is for the comprehensive government reform initiative to identify all issues, to make an assessment of the concerns and to recommend improvements for the shortcoming of these issues.

"True government reform needs to be carefully thought through and it must not be a reactionary event," Speaker Morgan said. "True government reform must occur at all levels of the Navajo Nation government — to all three branches."

"Comprehensive government reform is possible," Speaker Morgan concluded. "We all need to work together and listen to the Navajo people. I ask for your understanding and your patience as we begin to undertake this historic step toward true government reform for the Navajo people."

Speaker Morgan said that it is his focus as the leader of the Navajo Nation Council to ensure — through his representation — that comprehensive reform is initiated.

A memorandum of agreement (MOU) was signed by Speaker Morgan and President Shirley, which calls for both parties and their designees to meet to discuss the procedures and the process to begin discussions on government reform. It was agreed that five members from the legislative branch and five members from the executive branch will comprise this group. The members will be appointed by the Speaker and the President.

It is understood that once the two parties finalize the document on comprehensive government reform, the Navajo Nation Council will consider the legislation. If the Council approves the document, the Navajo people will have the opportunity to vote on the reform initiative.

According to the MOU, the legislation will be drafted for the Council's consideration, which involves amendments to the section in question — Title 2, section 102(A) of the Navajo Nation Code. The amendments to be considered will include language to address the majority of voters to change that section of the Navajo Nation Code.

It was also agreed that \$2 million will be appropriated to pay for activities related to the comprehensive government reform initiative; this appropriation will be used for mileage reimbursement, lodging and other incidental travel expenses incurred by the participants of the reform group.

President Shirley said that his office has collected nearly 10,000 signatures for his petition drive to reduce the Navajo Nation Council to 24 council delegates. Shirley said that he will continue to move forward in collecting the 16,800 signatures required to place the initiative on the ballot of a special election, if the Navajo Nation Council does not approve the legislation for a referendum election to amend Title 2 N.N.C. § 102(A).

According to the MOU, if the Navajo Nation Council fails to pass the new comprehensive government reform document, the MOU becomes nullified.