



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Council committee responds to President Shirley's mocking of Council

"The Navajo Nation has made great strides to influence congressional members, staff, government entities and others to support the Navajo Nation in protecting programs and direct service funding. These efforts on behalf of the Navajo people will falter if President Shirley continues to make the Navajo Nation Council's reduction a priority."

— Navajo Council Delegate Thomas Walker

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — More elected tribal officials are showing disdain at Navajo President Joe Shirley Jr.'s incessant attacks on the 21st Navajo Nation Council.

The most recent is Navajo Council Delegate Thomas Walker Jr., chair of the Health & Social Services Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council. Walker sent a letter to President Shirley on June 6 to express his committee's displeasure of the President's continued attacks to the Council.

In the letter, the Health & Social Services Committee (HSSC) urges President Shirley to begin a meaningful dialogue with the Legislative Branch, the Judicial Branch, the Navajo chapters and the Navajo people about how the Navajo Nation government can and should reform for the best interest of everyone involved.

"Let us all, as leaders of the Navajo Nation, take a step back and listen to the Diné. Let's pay closer attention to the funding trends at the national level, and let us return to a unified approach to the Navajo Nation's struggle to be heard," Walker said in the letter to President Shirley. "We have no choice but to go forward with diplomacy and truly represent the Diné."

Walker explained that council delegates, the president and the vice president represent the Navajo Nation at the local, state, regional and national levels on issues relating to health, social services and other matters important to the Navajo people.

Walker said that the Navajo Nation's influence on other tribes and government entities depend on the integrity of its leaders, which is being diminished by the continued in-fighting between the branches of government.

"The Diné are expressing concern over the direction of the Navajo Nation leadership; they feel they are being neglected and their needs are not met by the leaders whom they have elected to represent them," Walker explained.

Walker added that the reduction of the Navajo Nation Council to 24 members has become President Shirley's priority, but there are many other factors that threaten funding for direct services to the Navajo people.

Members of the HSSC agreed that real government reform must affect the units and systems within all branches of the Navajo Nation government.

"If we are truly concerned about government reform, let all branches come together and devise a plan," Walker said. "Once the unified plan has been developed, discussion should include the Navajo Nation Chapters and the Navajo people."

Walker added that "as leaders of the Navajo Nation, we should always remember that the credibility of the Navajo Nation government in protecting the governmental relationship with counties, municipalities, states and the federal government depends on the stability of our Nation's government."

The letter also stated that "the Navajo Nation has made great strides to influencing congressional members, staff, government entities and others to support the Navajo Nation in protecting programs and direct service funding. These efforts on behalf of the Navajo people will falter if President Shirley continues to make the Navajo Nation Council's reduction a priority."

The HSSC supports reform to the Navajo Nation government, but they said that "such an endeavor will require proper planning by all branches, the chapters and the Navajo people. The committee looks forward to President Shirley's participation in true government reform of the Navajo Nation."

The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan has attempted several times to meet with President Shirley to discuss "real" reform and Speaker Morgan said that real reform does not only involve reducing the numbers of council delegates — real reform needs to include all branches of the Navajo Nation government.