



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Diné Fundamental Law takes precedence over removal of Denetsosie

Denetsosie put on warning by Navajo Council once again

"We need to come to a consensus and use the system of K'e." — Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Diné Fundamental Law and the concept of using the system of K'e (kinship) has taken precedence over the removal of Navajo Nation Attorney General Louis Denetsosie during a special session of the 21st Navajo Nation Council today, June 30, at the historic Navajo Nation Council Chamber.

By a vote of 20 to 60, the Council defeated Legislation No. 0341-08 that would have removed Denetsosie as the attorney general of the Navajo Nation and instead decided to reprimand him once again.

The legislation was sponsored by the Honorable Young Jeff Tom (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake) and Lawrence R. Platero (Tohajiilee) and was action related to government services to remove Denetsosie.

In closing remarks to the Council, Tom suggested that the Council table the legislation until the summer session and he suggested that fundamental law needed to apply, but floor rules pushed for a vote on the main motion that resulted in its defeat. Denetsosie was told to be cognizant of his future actions while occupying the position of the AG by the Council.

The legislation mainly involved the Council's displeasure with Denetsosie and this was not the first time that the Council voiced its displeasure with his performance. The Council previously reprimanded Denetsosie by Resolution CO-74-03 a few years ago that put him on warning.

According to 2 N.N.C. §§1961-1965, the Navajo Nation Attorney General serves at the pleasure of the Navajo Nation Council under a set of specified duties and authorities, which requires that the AG consult with affected branches and entities of the Navajo Nation government prior to making determinations which affect them and which require that all duties and responsibilities of the office be performed in accordance with the highest standards of legal ethics as required of members of the Navajo Nation Bar Association and by the American Bar Association Code of Professional Conduct.

Tom explained that council delegates represent the Navajo people and all communities. He said that we come to the Council as elected officials

"When we come here we have a duty to make sure that our government is running efficiently," Tom explained. "We are here today to debate Denetsosie's performance as the attorney general and if he is not in accordance with the expectations of the government, then it is our duty to either reprimand him or remove him — he has broken that duty to the Council."

"Former AGs consulted with the Council and the president about certain controversial issues," Tom added. "Former AG Levon Henry asked for input from the Council Speaker and the Office of Legislative Council before moving forward in opinions — they coordinated with the Legislative Branch and Denetsosie should be doing the same."

Tom said that Denetsosie did not consult with the Council with his most recent opinion drafted for President Joe Shirley Jr.'s initiative to reduce the Council and that is the reason for this attempt to remove him.

Some council delegates strongly agreed with the removal, Katherine Benally for example. She said that she is saddened to see another legislation of this nature, but believed that Denetsosie brought this action upon himself.

"This has been brought before us two separate times," Benally said. "The last time, the Council found it in

their hearts to forgive him and we decided to work together and respect one another — that was promised.”

The Council has instead reprimanded him once again and the Council is encouraging the usage of K’e as a means to work out political differences within the Navajo Nation government.

The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan’s immediate response was one of unification of the Navajo Nation. Morgan said that the Diné Fundamental Law is in effect.

“Everyone is arguing fundamental law,” Speaker Morgan said. “The Navajo people are asking where is the concept of K’e? People are criticizing the government that we do not use this system anymore.”

Speaker Morgan said that “the Navajo Nation needs to get back to the basics and we should start today, since the Council decided to work things out with further discussion with the executive branch of the Navajo Nation. The Navajo people need to encourage the Speaker and the President to continue discussing comprehensive government reform for the betterment of the Navajo Nation.”

“We need to come to a consensus and use the system of K’e,” Morgan added. “Let us begin working in this manner now. Today’s events represent the Diné Fundamental Law at work.”

Speaker Morgan is a man of Navajo principle and he wants to return to a Navajo way of doing things. Morgan has always been a proponent for comprehensive government reform and would rather address reform on a broader scale, rather than just reducing the numbers of council delegates on the Navajo Council.

Speaker Morgan said that “today’s action resulted in no one coming out ahead and the Council chose to not push the legislation for the removal and they advised all involved entities to work together for the sake of the Navajo people — for the constituents.”

The Council also stressed the continuance of meeting with the president in discussing comprehensive government reform.

Orlanda Smith-Hodge (Cornfields/Greasewood Springs/Klagetoh/Wide Ruins) said that “I appreciate that the AG is here listening to us, because he is listening to our concerns and I hope he remembers them.”

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