



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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June 23, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Judicial Committee approves Judicial Elections Referendum Act of 2010, bill goes before full Council for final approval

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz., — The Judicial Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council is leading an effort of possibly inserting a ballot measure into the Navajo Nation General Election on Nov. 2, after passing the Judicial Elections Referendum Act of 2010 during a regular scheduled meeting.

The committee passed the Judicial Elections Referendum Act of 2010 (Legislation No. 0359-10), sponsored by Council Delegate Thomas Walker Jr. (Birdsprings/Leupp/Tolani Lake), which now goes before the full Council during its summer session for final approval. The committee passed Walker's measure, 5-0.

Council Delegate Walker's legislation supports the idea of Navajo people participating in their democracy. As well, the legislation respects the Navajo Nation Supreme Court's opinion (Nelson vs. Shirley) of offering the opportunity for the Navajo people to choose their leaders. On May 28, the high court issued its opinion in Nelson vs. Shirley stating, "The People have a fundamental right to choose their leaders and leaders have the obligation to ensure those rights."

Questions on this ballot referendum, through the Judicial Elections Referendum Act of 2010, would ask Navajo voters whether or not Navajo Nation District Court Judges and the Navajo Nation Supreme Court Justices should be elected positions or if the positions should continue to be appointed positions by the Navajo Nation President.

"This is a very important topic for the Navajo people," Walker said. "This document will continue to empower the people, keep their confidence and trust. Let us give them the option to use their power. In the spirit of continuing toward a positive change, I have brought forth this legislation."

The introduction of the legislation is also an attempt "to ensure the Navajo peoples' trust and confidence in the Navajo Nation Judiciary."

"We can delete obsolete policies and make our services more accessible to the people," Walk added. "We need to continue improving our government and to be transparent in how we make our decisions."

If Navajo voters favor elected judgeships, through majority vote, elected officials would undergo retention elections for a spot on the judiciary. As well, amendments would be necessary to Titles II, VII and XI of the Navajo Nation Code to accommodate the reform effort.

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