



The 21st Navajo Nation Council
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Young Jeff Tom: President Shirley's line-item veto robs the Navajo people of housing assistance, public employment opportunities from Chapters

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – When a Navajo constituent goes to their respective chapter government for housing discretionary funds or for public employment program opportunities, the chance will not be there. On June 24, President Joe Shirley exercised for the first time his line-item veto authority on Resolution CJN-25-10, which consequently robbed the Navajo people of their opportunity to seek such assistance from their local government – Navajo Nation Chapters.

"I am disappointed in President Shirley's line-item veto of the Public Employment Program and the chapter housing discretionary fund appropriations," Council Delegate Young Jeff Tom said (Mariano Lake/Smith Lake). "To deny the Navajo people of these fundamental opportunities is wrong. Apparently, this is how President Shirley views the Navajo people."

In an effort to address these needs, Council Delegate Tom spear-headed and sponsored Resolution CJN-25-10 to provide benefits to Navajo constituents at the local level, which the 21st Navajo Nation Council approved during a special session on June 8 with a vote of 60-13.

Tom's resolution consisted of providing \$2 million for youth employment programs and \$3 million for public employment programs to the Navajo Nation's 110 chapter governments. As well, the resolution included the following riders:

- 1) \$2 million for the Nazlini Chapter for a post office
- 2) \$2 million for the Navajo Nation Chapter Housing Discretionary Fund
- 3) \$500,000 for Office of the Speaker's discretionary funding

Tom said he was not surprised, if not expected, President Shirley to exercise his line-item veto authority on the riders but was most stunned that the \$3 million for public employment and \$2 million for chapter housing discretionary funds in particular were lined out.

Tom also referenced the May 28 Navajo Nation Supreme Court opinions as the basis for why Council passed his resolution because the high court ruled according to *Diné bi bóhoolnį́į́h* or the "people's decision," which the resolution encompassed.

Tom said it is ironic that President Shirley would contradict this notion of *Diné bi bóhoolnį́į́h* when there is extreme need for renovation of homes, electrical wiring, and jobs. The two budget appropriations would have provided these necessities and services for the Navajo people, but the people were the denied opportunity, he said.

The denial of public employment and chapter housing opportunities prevents the Navajo people from gaining proper training tools, employment, and assistance with basic housing infrastructure – all necessary means for survival. Already, the Navajo Nation experiences a high unemployment rate that hovers nearly around 50 percent, added Tom.

"On the one hand, President Shirley is saying, "It is the People's choice," but when it comes to budget appropriations he contradicts what he is saying," Tom remarked.

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Tom also questioned what the president will do to alleviate high unemployment and chapter housing assistance, "What plan does the president have to address these issues?" Furthermore, Tom noted that chapters could have used these funds for supplement appropriation for other local means.

Despite lining out the riders and the \$3 million allocation for public employment programs, the president did enact Resolution CJN-25-10 by approving the \$2 million appropriation for youth employment programs for all 110 chapters.

Tom said, "I am fine with the decision but that will not stop me from working for the people. I plan to sponsor a similar legislation, which will go the Council floor during the summer session."

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