



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

Contact: Joshua Lavar Butler, Communications Director

Bronson Peshlakai, Public Information Officer

Phone: (928) 871-6384

Cell: (928) 255-2946

Fax: (928) 871-7255

joshualavarbutler@navajo.org

joshualavarbutler@yahoo.com

www.navajonationcouncil.org

May 8, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaker Morgan asserts his position on President Shirley's initiative to monopolize his power

A balance of power is in place for a reason

"If the President cared about the goodwill of the Navajo people, he would not be causing disharmony and divisions within our Navajo Nation government." — Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan is asking the Navajo people to take caution before signing petitions that propose a reduction in the Navajo Nation Council from 88 members to 24 members.

President Joe Shirley Jr. said that "the reason for the Presidential Initiative on Government Reform is to bring needed accountability to the Navajo government, to protect tribal money from wasteful spending and to allow Navajo citizens greater participation in their government."

Speaker Morgan warns the Navajo people to carefully understand the impacts of the initiatives and he also warns the Navajo people that the Navajo Nation could put themselves into another position — a position that may repeat events from 1989.

"The safety of the Nation is at hand," Speaker Morgan said.

The President announced the formation of a Presidential Task Force on Government Reform, but Speaker Morgan would like the Navajo people to know that this task force comprises only of President Shirley's key staff.

Speaker Morgan said that the President's Task Force is duplicating services and that the Nation already has the Navajo Government Development Office. "The Navajo people need to question if this is wasteful spending of duplicating services."

"This initiative does not represent reform, but it does represent an attempt by the Navajo Nation President to overtake the government," Speaker Morgan said. "The Navajo people should not allow this dangerous move by the President."

President Shirley's plan will change the entire organization of the Navajo Nation government, a plan that will benefit and provide a substantial amount of political power to the President alone.

"I doubt the Navajo people want to rewind ourselves back to the occurrences that led to the incident that occurred in 1989." Speaker Morgan said.

The reduction in the council's current size will not improve government efficiency and effectiveness — if anything — it will only increase the bureaucracy in the tribal government. The President's plan is mere speculation and it is a plan to monopolize his power — it's a situation of control.

The President continues to advocate the notion that his idea will create a balance of power between the legislative and executive branches of the Navajo government, but the Navajo people should know that there is already a system in place — a system that our President refuses to work with.

The President also continues to criticize the Council for micro-managing the tribal divisions and departments, but the Navajo people should understand that the Council is carrying out its intended function as oversight committees. The President wants sole control over every aspect of the

tribal government and the Navajo people should not allow this to happen.

Speaker Morgan will continue to stress to the Navajo people that President Shirley's initiative is not a democratic form of government. "He is merely setting up a government that will work in his favor."

"The Navajo people will lose their voice in their government and the Navajo people will be limited to who they choose to send to the Council," Speaker Morgan explained. "The Navajo people should not allow this dangerous move — haven't we learned from history?"

In a press release from the President's office, Shirley noted that eight million Arizonans are represented in the U.S. Senate by two U.S. Senators and he suggests that this system will work for the Navajo Nation.

"Why are we applying a federal model to the Navajo Nation," Speaker Morgan questioned. "As Navajo people, we have different issues. We are more grassroots-oriented. That's ridiculous to assume that this will work. We are a different group of people. We use the system of K'e."

"How can we as Navajo people accept this idea," Speaker Morgan questioned. "We are Navajo people with a unique culture and ideals. Why do we continue to squeeze our government into a box?"

Speaker Morgan stands by his assertion that the reduction of the Council will hinder and discourage the involvement of the Navajo people.

A reduction to 24 council delegates will result in less contact with constituents, not to mention less time spent addressing the needs of the Navajo people. The days of constituents meeting with council delegates will be gone. Appointments will most likely be required to express your concerns, considering the busy schedules that council delegates will be subjected to.

"The reduction will also result in a much greater number of larger multi-chapter precincts, it will increase bureaucracy," Speaker Morgan said. "The Navajo people will lose their individualized representation relative to their chapters. Our council delegates' time will be stretched far too thin between meetings with their chapters and their constituents."

"How is the President's plan going to address the workloads of our Council Delegates," Speaker Morgan questioned. "A plan to have 24 council delegates will undoubtedly require increased staff, office space and costs. As it is now, our council delegates handle their own administrative work."

The President criticizes the balance of power of our Navajo Nation government, a balance that he wants to reform — a system that he wants to create himself and a system that will benefit the Presidency only.

"A balance of power does exist — that's reality," Speaker Morgan added. The President says that the three-branch government was never ratified, which likely makes him a temporary President."

The President continues to criticize the Council's salaries and their stipends. "Our Council Delegates work hard on behalf of the Navajo people," Speaker Morgan said.

If the President is so concerned about saving money, he should clean his own house first. The Navajo people should be made aware of the tribal funds used to fuel his entourage of black full-size sport utility vehicles, his numerous daily trips of burning jet fuel and his use of tribal resources to collect signatures for his initiative. Not to mention his full staff of security personnel.

Speaker Morgan defends the advocacy for veterans' issues, in reference to President Shirley's criticism of wasteful spending on motorcycle rides and horse rides. Speaker Morgan questions if the President is accusing the veterans of wasting money?

It is worth noting that the Navajo Council has repeatedly allocated appropriations to the 110 chapters for direct services. This is done, because the President is not doing it.

"The President calls this wasteful use of the people's money," Speaker Morgan said. "Why is the President criticizing the Navajo people for receiving their own money — that's a question that our Navajo people should be asking him?"

The President says that "this fiscal year the Navajo Police Department alone lost numerous officers who joined other police departments that pay more." Speaker Morgan says that maybe it is because of the President's lack of leadership.

The President questions, "Where are the power and water line extensions, the wastewater

treatment facilities, jail and court facilities, new Head Start and Senior Citizens centers?"

Speaker Morgan says that the President should question himself, "what he has done thus far to help in this overall effort?" Meanwhile, the Navajo Council continues to pick up the responsibility for these projects, because the President is not doing his job.

The President said "the 1990 government reforms that resulted in Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code was specifically intended to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of one individual or one branch of government."

"The Navajo people should be glad that Title 2 is in existence," Speaker Morgan said. "Title 2 prevents the President from having a large concentration of power in his hands — that's what he desires."

"The President is threatening to topple this governmental structure and it's going to be dangerous to put that much power into the hands of the President — one individual." Speaker Morgan added. "The President says 'it is like a captain rearranging the deck chairs on a sinking ship'... I don't think so."

Speaker Morgan questions the true intent of the President's initiative and wonders if this publicity stunt is an effort to divert the attention away from the President's office. "Maybe the Navajo people should question his true intent?"

"If the President cared about the goodwill of the Navajo people, he would not be causing disharmony and divisions within our Navajo Nation government," Speaker Morgan concluded.

- ### -