



## The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **President Shirley's initiatives to reduce Council, gain line item veto power fail to move forward for insufficiency of signatures**

*Reform is more than reducing Council, more than just an amendment to one paragraph to Code*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Nov. 12, the Navajo Election Administration sent notice to Navajo President Joe Shirley Jr. that his two initiatives failed to move forward for insufficient petition signatures.

On Oct. 28, President Shirley and his initiative petition committee delivered signatures to the Navajo Election Administration for the two initiatives, one to reduce the Navajo Nation Council — the most fundamental voice of the Navajo people — and the other to gain line item veto power for the President.

As required by 11 N.N.C. §404(B) (13), the Navajo Election Administration is required to examine and verify petitions. The Navajo Election Administration reported on Nov. 7 that they completed their examination and verification and determined that the petitions lacked enough signatures.

The initiatives required 15 percent of all eligible registered Navajo voters, in order to get the initiatives on the ballot. Currently, there are approximately 110,202 eligible registered Navajo Nation voters listed on the registration roster. Fifteen percent of this amount is 16,530 — the number that each initiative required.

It was also reported by the Navajo Election Administration that 18,638 signatures were collected by the Office of the President, of which 14,273 were determined valid and sufficient for the initiative to reduce the Council and 18,002 signatures were collected with 13,622 valid and sufficient to give the President line item veto power. The insufficiency was largely due to petition signers not being registered voters and others signing the petitions more than once.

Almost immediately, the Office of the Speaker began receiving questions in regards to the latest developments of the President's two initiatives, questioning how it will impact Speaker Morgan's push toward initiating comprehensive government reform on behalf of the Navajo people. Speaker Morgan will continue pushing the plan by the Diné Policy Institute, a plan called the "Navajo Nation Constitutional Feasibility and Government Reform Project."

It is very important to note that the Diné Policy Institute report is one option toward comprehensive government reform and this well-received report was done as an independent study and not by Speaker Morgan.

Regardless of the outcome of the two initiatives, Speaker Morgan will plan to move forward with ideas to initiate comprehensive reform.

"I believe that there is a need for comprehensive reform, but it would take more than just an amendment to one paragraph of the Navajo Nation Code," Speaker Morgan said. "There's more to comprehensively reforming our tribal government than just reducing and quieting the Navajo people's voice through their elected council delegates."

Speaker Morgan has been speaking about reform since the 20th Navajo Nation Council and it has always been on his political agenda. This shows the Speaker's commitment to improving the Navajo Nation government for the Navajo people — he's been on record for promoting this for a long time, it was not an overnight concept and it was not reactionary.

Speaker Morgan's next step in pushing comprehensive government reform is to continue educating the Navajo public and the Navajo Nation Council about the DPI plan.

The plan is to give the Council good information, so that they are able to intelligently think this situation through — this is the first step.

A lot of decisions will hinge on what the Navajo Nation Council does with this plan; it now belongs with the Council and the Navajo people.

Speaker Morgan has always been behind the notion of comprehensive government reform, if this is what the Navajo people desire. The Navajo Nation Council is listening and has thus far, welcomed the DPI report that Speaker Morgan presented to them — a plan that was well received by the Council and a plan that may very well jump start this movement toward comprehensively reforming our tribal government.

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