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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# Speaker Morgan to present report on feasibility of a constitutional government for Navajo Nation during 2008 Fall session

*Report backed by scholarly research, academic references*

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan has announced the completion of a report which examines and analyzes the feasibility of a constitutional government for the Navajo Nation, a report that he will present to the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council during its Fall Session scheduled Oct. 20-24 at the historic Navajo Nation Council Chamber.

The report was conducted over a period of one year by the Diné Policy Institute of Diné College. It is based on extensive literature review conducted by policy researchers and in the report, they apply theoretical policy findings to a Navajo context for a constitutional government and support their recommendations with scholarly research and academic references.



Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler

"The report thoroughly examines the Navajo Nation government from an objective point of view and offers un-bias suggestions on government reform," Speaker Morgan said. "The suggestions offered in this report are supported by legitimate scholarly research — making it creditable."

The 71-page report is divided into four primary sections, which include: Constitutionalism, Governance and the Separation of Powers, Judicial Review in the Navajo Nation and Recommendations for the Future. A primary emphasis of the report was that the restructuring of the government should be conducted to embrace historic governing practices of the Diné.

The report examines the foundational principals related to constitutionalism, the concept of constitutionalism related to the Navajo Nation and its nation-state status. The study can be downloaded on the Navajo Nation Council's website at [www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org). It was also given to each of the 88 council delegates for review.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion drawn from the study is the continuance of the Navajo Nation Code and "...legislation that will strengthen the powers of the courts, amend the Fundamental Laws of the Diné to remove references to structure of governance and to restructure the executive branch, removing the Office of the President and strengthening the regional agencies into naacids" (Constitutional Feasibility Study, p. 42).

The report recommends restructuring the Executive Branch by "...moving away from the U.S. Presidential model, and more toward a parliamentary model with 'checks' on power coming from empowered local communities" (Constitutional Feasibility Study, p. 42). The report offers insight as to how a parliamentary government would possibly be applied to Navajo government while paralleling traditional values.

"This study was not completed to favor the Legislative Branch, the Judicial Branch, nor the Executive Branch," Morgan said. "It equally critiques each branch, how they work together and how the relationship between the three branches can be improved to better serve the needs of the Navajo people. In essence, this report depicts comprehensive government reform."

The report includes other political structures for lawmakers to consider and offers various ways of restructuring the existing governmental paradigm. The recommendations for the future are broken into four models: Approaches for an Alternative Model Government, The Bicameral Parliamentary Model, and Diné Political Philosophy and Decentralization Model.

One Navajo researcher developed implementation of a 15-year plan that methodically marshals the Diné towards local level based government reform, while insuring delivery of governmental services. The report suggests:

Year 1 and 2: Assemble scholars, researchers, and traditional scholars to study the basic theoretical inconsistencies of Navajo thought and current political idealizations of the Nation.

Year 3 and 4: Assemble researchers to study the effectiveness of the current governmental system in meeting the needs of the people and achieving the aspirations of the Diné.

Year 5: Develop a set of recommendations on reform for the Navajo, based on this research.

Year 6 and 7: Take these recommendations to the Diné in forums, chapter houses, agency meetings, urban areas and so forth to determine the needs of the people.

Year 8 to 15: Revise set of recommendations of the people and slowly over the years implement the reform in manageable portions, so as not to shock the citizenry and to sure that vital government services are not disrupted.

"This approach resembles a systematic and comprehensive approach to develop group consensus at the local level for future changes," Morgan said. "More importantly, it is a sophisticated treatment of governmental reform and not a reactionary initiative."

Another major part of governmental reform rests on development and strengthening of the courts to resolve institutional differences between the Executive and Legislative Branches (Constitutional Feasibility Study, p. 40). The strengthening of the judicial branch is developed based on the concept of "rule of law," which means government is best when the public officials follow the law. Accordingly, no branch or public official should be able to manipulate the law without good cause authorized by law.

"The report is to help direct the Navajo people towards a serious inquiry of comprehensive government reform," Morgan added. "I encourage the members of the Navajo Nation Council to thoroughly educate themselves on the different ways we can improve the structure of our government and I await their decision regarding further actions on this matter."

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