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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CHIEF JUSTICE YAZZIE URGES COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING FOR FEDERAL FUNDING NEEDS**

The Navajo Nation Judicial Branch has released the Annual Message of Chief Justice Herb Yazzie in which he described the needs and accomplishments of the branch in 2011. As in previous annual messages, Chief Justice Yazzie called attention to the insufficiency of funding which this year resulted in the termination of a grant-funded case management program for youth in detention and the laying off of staff. He hopes that legislation now underway will revive this program. Another separate legislation is also underway to fix the Chinle courthouse roof and relocate Window Rock court staff due to asbestos in their current building.

The Chief Justice also described strides in implementation of an automated justice information sharing and records keeping system, and the certification of 19 peacemakers that qualifies them to provide traditional counseling, education and peacemaking services to children in after-school programs.

The Chief Justice primarily focused his message on the urgent need for the Navajo Nation to begin comprehensive planning for its program goals and budgets. There are two urgent reasons why this is needed. Firstly, imminent cuts will be made, starting in Fiscal Year 2013, to governmental funding under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, or P.L. 93-638. These cuts are mandatory and projected to be in place for the next ten years. If the Navajo Nation does not comprehensively plan for these long-term cuts, decisions regarding reducing or eliminating programs may be left to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Secondly, tribes are now required to submit single applications for all courts and justice programs when seeking federal grant funds. In this single application, programs must work together and the purposes of the applying programs must be focused in a single strategic narrative.

Until now, programs have sought P.L. 93-638 and grant funds on an ad hoc basis. The Chief Justice said it is time for the Navajo Nation government to provide an overall policy-driven plan for the impacted programs. Regarding P.L. 93-638 funded programs, he stated, "Rather than wait for the BIA to present its plan as to how our programs will be reduced or eliminated, it is time for the Navajo Nation government to decide, for itself, what areas to prioritize as a reflection of our values and our vision for the role of our government."

Currently, the Navajo Nation neither has a central planning body nor a coordinating office with abilities to comprehensively plan or negotiate P.L. 93-638 contract funding, ensure program compliance with numerous rules and requirements, or draft and submit a comprehensive single tribe grant application.

The Chief Justice's annual message is available on the [www.navajocourts.org](http://www.navajocourts.org) website.

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