



Contact: Karen Francis, *Government Relations Officer*
Office of the Chief Justice
JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE NAVAJO NATION
Office: 928-871-6920
E-mail: karenfrancis@navajo-nsn.gov
<http://www.navajocourts.org>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: Tuesday, October 22, 2019



CHIEF JUSTICE PROVIDES REPORT AT NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL FALL SESSION

JoAnn B. Jayne, Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation, presented the Judicial Branch report for the Fiscal Year 2019 Fourth Quarter to the Navajo Nation Council on October 21, 2019.

Chief Justice Jayne said that her priority with the anticipated decreasing revenue for the Navajo Nation is to protect the People's money and to avoid layoffs of Judicial Branch employees. She said that this is now the time for the three branch leadership of the Navajo Nation to begin discussion on the Fiscal Year 2021 budget.

“The strategic goal that the Judicial Branch has is that we want to be efficient, fair and also respectful to all of those that utilize our services. The Judicial Branch exists to educate people,” Chief Justice Jayne said.

“We want to ensure access,” she said. “We have developed a judicial system in accordance to Diné Bi Beenahaz’áanii ... The peacemaking program and probation utilize Fundamental Law... That is a very, very important part of what we do.”

Jayne said the branch receives federal grants that supplement the work of the branch and help to address gaps in service delivery. The branch currently has six grants totaling \$1.7 million. Their purposes vary and include grants for the Peacemaking Program’s Peacemaker Youth Apprenticeship Program, a juvenile healing to wellness court at Chinle Judicial District, and a re-entry program for the Office of Probation and Parole Services. The grant funds are on hold but the Judicial Branch is working with federal partners to resolve pending issues to release the funds.

Regarding the Window Rock District Court, Jayne said that the court is making strides to relocate services and the branch will be seeking funds to secure a building to be located in the Fort Defiance chapter. The Window Rock court is currently sharing office space with the Administrative Offices of the Courts and utilizes the old and new Supreme Court hearing rooms to hear cases.

Jayne updated the Council on the continued dire need for judges. There are 18 judge positions within the branch but only eight are currently filled, Jayne said. She said that there are currently four applications for judge and three applications for Associate Justice, which has been vacant since 2010. Those applications are forwarded to the President of the Navajo Nation if the applicants are recommended for probationary appointment.

“We would like to have more judge applicants. If they are listening at this time, please contact the Judicial Branch,” Jayne said.

The Chief Justice’s report was accepted with a vote of 14 in favor and none opposed.

###