



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council members join acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan for the opening of the new Supreme Court facility



PHOTO: (From left to right) Vice President Jonathan Nez, Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Associate Justice Eleanor Shirley, Miss Navajo Nation 2016-2017 Ronda Joe, Acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan, Delegate Otto Tso, Delegate Edmund Yazzie, Delegate Tuchoney Slim, Jr., Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr., and Delegate Tom Chee.

WINDOW ROCK – Members of the Law and Order Committee and several other members of the Navajo Nation Council joined acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan and dozens of Judicial Branch employees on Thursday at the Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock, to celebrate the opening of the new Navajo Nation Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts, which is located east of the park in Window Rock.

Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi), a member of the Law and Order Committee which serves as the oversight committee for the Judicial Branch, sponsored legislation that was unanimously approved by the Navajo Nation Council in January, that provided \$300,000 from the Nation's Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance to assist in the completion of the modular

buildings by providing funds for the design the electrical system, installation of a new waterline, concrete for site access and curbing, asphalt for an access road, and a parking lot.

Delegate Tso was invited to speak at the opening ceremony, where he emphasized the importance of leadership working together to help provide efficient services for the Navajo people, adding that he will push for the establishment of a permanent Supreme Court facility.

“We have to provide the best facilities for our Navajo Nation employees,” said Delegate Tso. “It’s long over due.”

Associate Justice Eleanor Shirley provided the opening remarks and touched on the challenges that the Supreme Court staff have dealt with for years as a result of dilapidated offices, which eventually led to having the staff members relocate to other offices due to mold and other issues. Several staff members have also been working out of the housing unit that is designated for the Chief Justice, according to Shirley.

Acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan thanked the Executive and Legislative Branches for supporting the Judicial Branch and for working together to address the dilapidated facilities.

“This is the first time in the history of my service that I’ve seen the three administrations work together like this,” said Chief Justice Sloan, who also presented certificates of appreciation to Council members, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Facilities Maintenance Department manager Marcus Tulley, and the many Judicial Branch staff members who helped complete the facility.

Chair of the Law and Order Committee Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), thanked his LOC colleagues for their advocacy and for pushing the legislation to be approved. The LOC has made Judicial Branch facilities a top priority since its members took office in January 2015.

“This is what can be accomplished when we collaborate and work together and I ask that we continue to do so,” said Delegate Yazzie.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) also thanked Chief Justice Sloan for bringing the issue to the Council’s attention and for supporting the legislation.

“Today, we stand here together as a result of Delegate Tso’s support and advocacy,” said Speaker Bates. “I thank Delegate Tso and chairman Edmund Yazzie and the rest of the Law and Order Committee for supporting the Judicial Branch and for pushing for the Council’s approval of funding for this new facility.”

Newly crowned Miss Navajo Nation 2016-2017 Ronda Joe was also in attendance and sang the National Anthem at the start of the ceremony.

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