



# 23<sup>RD</sup> NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

## OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

HONORABLE LORENZO C. BATES  
SPEAKER, 23<sup>RD</sup> NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

**February 2, 2017**

### **STATEMENT FROM SPEAKER LORENZO BATES: PRESIDENT BEGAYE MUST ADDRESS ISSUES WITH THE COUNCIL**

During President Russell Begaye's presidential campaign, he told the Navajo people time and time again that he would work with the Navajo Nation Council to move issues forward and to make progress for our Nation. Unfortunately, in many instances since he has taken office, President Begaye has not responded to the Council's requests to meet, discuss, and resolve many important issues. In other instances, the Council has anticipated his presence at such meetings, only to be told that President Begaye is unable to attend and instead his staff is sent to represent him.

In today's edition of the Navajo Times, President Begaye has once again resorted to the media to mislead the Navajo people by providing inaccurate and politically motivated information regarding legislation to recommend changes to the Appropriations Act to clarify the president's authority to line item veto Conditions of Appropriations (COA's).

The legislation does not attempt to limit the authority granted by the Navajo people. The Council respects the voice of the people as set forth by the referendum passed in 2009, which gave the president the authority to line item veto "budget line items" and does not specifically give the authority to line item veto Conditions of Appropriations. COA's serve as accountability measures to hold programs, divisions, and employees accountable. If President Begaye does not want accountability, then he should simply say so.

The legislation is simply a recommendation to the Council and does not seek to take away the presidential line item veto authority, as wrongfully implied by the President. As I have stated before, there remains a need to clarify the line-item authority and this legislation would move us in that direction. The Budget and Finance Committee will consider the legislation and I implore President Begaye to attend the committee's meeting and address his concerns in person.

The Council has called upon President Begaye through letters, verbally, and other means to sit down and resolve issues over the presidential line item veto authority. Instead, President Begaye continues to voice these issues through newspapers, radio, and social media.

Our Navajo people, our communities, the Council, and I are tired of having these issues aired out in the

media rather than sitting down and talking these matters out face-to-face as our leaders did long ago.

One might ask why then would I issue this statement publicly. In response, and as I have stated previously, the Council has exhausted other means of communicating and requesting meetings with the President. The Council is well aware that ongoing disagreements continue to stifle progress on initiatives and projects that are being held up due to the lack of communication between the Council and President Begaye.

The bottom line is that we as leaders need to meet – without staff, attorneys, or others – to have an open and honest discussion. I extend an open invitation to President Begaye to sit down, have a cup of coffee, and talk.



LoRenzo Bates, Speaker  
23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council

