



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly signs Navajo Adult Guardianship Act of 2014 into law



Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed the Adult Guardianship Act of 2014 into law on Thursday. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—
T'aa bi bohol niih.

“It’s up to the person” is not only a concept of Navajo Fundamental Law, but it is also an inherent right of disabled Navajo citizens.

On June 12, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed the Navajo Adult Guardianship Act of 2014 into law and reaffirmed the rights of disabled Navajos.

“The most important thing we need to remember is that (disabled citizens) have rights that are guaranteed by Navajo Fundamental Law,” President Shelly said.

Such rights include decision making in regard to finances, education, housing and guardianship consent.

He explained that when the Shelly-Jim administration

first took office, they began by hosting a series of town hall meetings across the Navajo Nation to engage the Navajo people on their needs.

From those discussions, the challenges facing disabled Navajo citizens came to light, in particular the fact that there have been no major amendments to the tribal code regarding the disabled since 1945.

The newly enacted Guardianship Act changes all of that.

“We have been meeting with Hoskie Benally, president of the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disabilities to assist with legislation that meets (the disabled) needs,” President Shelly said. “We’ve also been meeting with the Native American Disability

Law Center to discuss the legal aspects of the legislation.”

He said the Executive Branch would make the recommendation to invest funding from the \$554 million trust settlement for accessibility at tribal offices and buildings, including facilities at the chapter level.

We have not forgotten the needs of our disabled Navajos, he said, especially since many are returning home with disabilities from the war.

Hoskie Benally, president of the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disabilities, expressed gratitude for the new law.

“It’s been since 1945 that (the tribal code) has been revised to meet the needs and give the due process to those with disabilities,” Benally said.

Council delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Standing Rock, White Rock) called the law “historical.”

“I took this legislation very personal to get it passed. As you know, when something very comprehensive comes before the council, it takes five to 10 years to get it passed,” Simpson said.

The 26-page legislation took one-and-a-half years to get enacted by the Navajo Nation Council and President Shelly.

