



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 19, 2016

Communications Office
Office of the President and Vice President
Mihio Manus
Michele J. Crank
928.871.7000

PRESIDENT BEGAYE VETOS REGIONALIZATION REFERENDUM ENSURING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE NAVAJO PEOPLE IN THE PROCESS

WINDOW ROCK-Today President Russell Begaye vetoed the Referendum for Chapter Regionalization legislation to protect the voice of the Navajo people by ensuring their participatory role in the Regionalization process.

As stated in the Descriptive Summary of the Referendum Question, if Navajo voters are to vote in favor of the Regionalization Referendum, the Navajo Nation Council will be authorized to pass enabling legislation to amend Title 26, reorganizing 110 Chapters into 24 Regional Governments.

President Begaye said the legislation language excludes public input and representation which he feels is of critical importance in this matter.

"We feel the voice of the Navajo people is critical in voting on this referendum and we are by no means taking this decision-making opportunity from them," President Begaye said. "However, in reviewing this legislation, we feel it's imperative that the Navajo people are represented justly in the process of reorganizing 110 Chapters into the 24 Regional Governments, if that's how the people vote. This process shouldn't be based solely on the decisions of Council."

Vice President Jonathan Nez said he'd like to see increased collaboration between the Executive and Legislative Branches in considering overall governmental reform as opposed to focusing only on Chapter level reform.

"Overall government reform should be considered and not exclusively just chapter reform. An overall government reform can bring about a more efficient and responsive government for our people," Vice President Nez said. "I believe that by working with Council, pursuant to the public hearings, we can come up with more options for the people to vote on. We should work together to develop a restructured government. This legislation has potential to affect the overall Navajo Nation government beyond the regionalization of Chapters."

The Regionalization legislation, which was approved by the 23rd Navajo Nation Council on Monday, Aug. 8, was slated to be placed on the ballot in November if approved by President Begaye.

In vetoing the legislation, the president said he wants to see this matter go for a vote but in a form that will give power and consideration to public input into the process of regional restructuring.

"This is an important decision. In essence it creates super chapters across the Nation. If this is the direction the people chose to move toward, I'd like to ensure the participation and input of the Navajo people in the process," he said. "I'd also like to see more public outreach so the voters are informed in making this critical decision. This decision will not only affect the Chapters and communities but also future generations of the Navajo people."

###