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## PRESIDENT BEGAYE VETOES THREE AMENDMENTS IN NAVAJO NATION FY 2017 BUDGET

WINDOW ROCK, ARIZ-After careful review, President Russell Begaye exercised his presidential line-item veto authority on three amendments specific to Section Two of the Navajo Nation Fiscal Year 2017 Budget.

President Begaye line-item vetoed \$296,406 for the Election Administration Office. The Navajo Nation Council, on Oct. 29, signed into law a supplemental resolution appropriating \$510,616 to the Navajo Election Administration. The request of an additional \$296,406 to the NEA would be fiscally irresponsible.

"The \$296,406 wasn't indicated as going toward the referendum vote. It wasn't written into the resolution and there was no reference to it," President Begaye said. "If Council wanted these funds to be appropriated to the referendum, they should have clarified this within their amendment."

The president also line-item vetoed an amendment appropriating \$50,000 to the Department of Water Resources Management for a Little Colorado River alluvial study.

The rationale for this particular veto was that a Memorandum of Understanding was modified with the Bureau of Indian Affairs that provided additional funding of \$100,000 to be partly utilized for contractual services for the study.

Since the grant has been awarded, these funds can be used for other critical needs.

Lastly, President Begaye vetoed an amendment pertaining to the proposed withholding of ten percent of a program's non-personnel operating budget as a penalty of non-compliance regarding Conditions of Appropriation (COA) within the 2017 Budget.

In the budget message, the president states that enforcement of COAs "should be in a form to discipline the employees not carrying out their duties, but not to harm the Navajo people being served."

"While we view the COAs as being important in holding divisions and departments accountable in providing services, Council is actually penalizing the people and not the personnel. The proposed withholding comes from the operating costs of the services that we provide to the people."

Because COAs are put in place to ensure that employees are fulfilling their responsibilities, President Begaye said the proposed withholdings should be directed toward the respective employee's salaries.

"This is where the penalty should be applied," he said. "It shouldn't be that our people are being penalized for an employee who isn't carrying out their duties."

The president also stated that he will continue to work with Division Directors to hold Executive Branch employees accountable for their work performance.

Regarding the president's line-item veto authority, President Begaye reiterated that this authority was given to the Office of the President and Vice President by the Navajo people.

"The line-item veto authority was given to the president by the people through referendum. If there is any clarification that needs to be done regarding this authority, it's the Navajo people who should initiate this, not the Council."

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