



THE NAVAJO NATION  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director  
(928) 221-9253

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer  
(928) 286-7918

[nnopvp.communications@gmail.com](mailto:nnopvp.communications@gmail.com)

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**Navajo Nation thanks Arizona Attorney General  
for joining the defense of the Indian Child Welfare Act**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer commend Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich for his recent announcement that Arizona is part of a bipartisan coalition of 19 states that filed an amicus brief in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to defend the Indian Child Welfare Act in *Brakeen v. Zinke*.

In Oct. 2017, the state of Texas and a non-Indian foster family in Texas filed a complaint, in federal district court, which challenged the constitutionality of the act and the 2016 ICWA regulations. The complaint was later amended to include the states of Louisiana and Indiana and additional foster families in Nevada and Minnesota.

President Nez said the lower court's decision finding ICWA unconstitutional would drastically impact the lives of American Indian children, including Navajo children.

"The Navajo Nation must continue to take a firm stance to defend the Indian Child Welfare Act. If the Fifth Circuit Court decides in favor of the plaintiffs, it could create greater uncertainty for thousands of American Indian children and families in the state child welfare systems. Our children are sacred and precious and we need to protect them because they are our future," said President Nez.

Vice President Myron Lizer added that the Indian Child Welfare Act was enacted to protect the best interests of American Indian children and to avoid displacement of children from birth families and their tribes.

"Our children are our 'way of life' and our future. Our children should never feel the fear of being taken away from their families, tribe, and cultural identity. Our ancestors have experienced historical trauma and we should not allow history to repeat itself," said Vice President Lizer.

"The Office of the President and Vice President will work closely with the Navajo Nation Department of Justice and incoming Attorney General Doreen Nanibaa McPaul, to defend the health and welfare of Navajo children and families," added President Nez.

The states of California, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, and Washington are also part of the coalition that filed the amicus brief in the Fifth Circuit Court.

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