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THE NAVAJO NATION

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Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr. vetoes appropriations amendments that would cut services

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr. has vetoed amendments to the Navajo Nation Appropriations Act that would have cut the Navajo Executive Branch budget by more than \$5.1 million for direct services while boosting both the Legislative and Judicial Branch budgets.

In his veto Feb. 13 message to Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan, the President said the legislation would have negatively affected Navajo chapters, senior citizens, police services, education and other Executive Branch functions.

The President also said the legislation would serve to reduce the power of the Presidency by eliminating veto or signatory authority over budget legislation.

President Shirley said he vetoed CJA-06-06 – amendments to the Navajo Appropriations Act of 2005 – because it lacked data to support its need, was arbitrary and unjustified.

“Although I agree that clarifying and streamlining the budget and appropriations processes within the Navajo Nation is essential for effective governmental operations,” the President wrote, “I disagree with several floor amendments that will have a major impact on the Executive Branch and possibly on the authority of the Office of the President.”

“These amendments will have a major impact on the Executive Branch and possibly on the authority of the Office of the President.”

– Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr.

The legislation would have established branch allocations at 78 percent for the Executive Branch, 14 percent for Legislative, and eight percent for the Judicial Branch. Those amounts would have then been reviewed for possible amendments by the Budget and Finance Committee with approval of all standing committees of the Navajo Nation Council every two years.

The President said the legislation contained no rational justification for those planning base amounts.

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“According to the Office of Management and Budget, this amendment will decrease the Executive Branch allocation by 4.3 percent, increase the Legislative Branch allocation by 3.01 percent and increase the Judicial Branch allocation by 1.28 percent,” he wrote. “Without reliable information that supports the rationale, need and purpose for statutorily establishing branch allocations at the percentage set forth in Section 830, this amendment is arbitrary and lacks justification.”

The President said the legislation was “inconsistent with Title 2 and the power of the Navajo Nation President to sign into law or veto legislation.”

The amendment to Section 830 would have empowered the Budget and Finance Committee and the standing committees to approve amendments to the established branch allocations. Based upon its language, future amendments could have been approved without Council action and Executive review and approval. Consequently, the amendment would have diminished the power of the President to sign into law or veto future amendments to this specific section.

The President also said that because no impact analysis was conducted, the legislation would have unintended detrimental affects on the Office of Management and Budget to perform a number of tasks. These include developing a budget format that will incorporate features of performance budgeting, performance monitoring and compliance, strategic planning, performance sanctions, and cost control measures.

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