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NAVAJO VOTERS CAST VOTES FOR CONTINUITY

Across the Navajo Nation, Navajo voters took to the polls on Tuesday, November 7, 2006, to choose their leaders for the next four years with elections for Navajo Nation President/Vice President, 88 Council delegates, Navajo Board of Election Supervisors and the first Navajo Nation Board of Education.

In an overwhelming show of support for continuity, Navajo voters re-elected more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of Navajo Nation Council delegates and re-elected Joe Shirley, Jr. for President with former Thoreau Council delegate Ben Shelly as his running mate, according to unofficial results from the Navajo Election Administration (NEA).

The NEA reported that voter turnout was approximately 64 percent this election year, the highest voter turnout to date. The NEA further noted that the Navajo Nation surpassed the 100,000 mark of total registered voters.

“We were expecting a 60-70 percent turnout so we were on target,” said Kimmeth Yazzie from the NEA. “Sixty-four percent of 100,000 registered voters is considered a major accomplishment by the Election Administration.”

The results for the election takes place 10 days after election by the Board of Election Supervisors. The oath of office is scheduled to take place the week of January 5-9, 2007.

Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan, who himself was re-elected by the Iyanbito and Pinedale Chapters, expressed congratulations and appreciation to the voters, election officials and candidates for actively participating in the Navajo Nation government.

“The Navajo people came out in great numbers to choose the direction that our nation will head in the next four years. They have spoken through their votes. They desire continuity in our government. They have seen that a working relationship must be cultivated through time and experience. It will take a cooperative spirit from both the Legislative and Executive Branches to move forth,” Speaker Morgan said.

“The Navajo Nation is ready to move forward and continue working on the business of the nation. There is much work to be done and we realize that a part of the message we received yesterday is that work must continue uninterrupted,” Speaker Morgan said.

For Morgan, and many other delegates who represent more than one Chapter, the day was spent dividing time among the Chapters and speaking with constituents about issues they want the delegates to address during the next term.

“It was so hectic, but I was really amazed at the support I got and I was very humbled,” Council delegate Evelyn Acothley said about Election Day. Acothley spent the day traveling to the three Chapters of Bodaway-Gap, Coppermine and Cameron located on the western portion of the Navajo Nation. Acothley walked away with the most votes from the three Chapters yesterday.

Speaking about the support given to her by constituents yesterday, Acothley said, “It was really encouraging. It puts me in a position where I need to really be there to advocate on their behalf for the next four years. They believe in me and it gives me confidence to address and resolve the issues we need to overcome.”

Some delegates were able to partner with their fellow delegates in ensuring that their presence was known at the Chapters they represent. St. Michaels and Oak Springs delegates Ray Berchman, Curran Hannon and Roy Dempsey. Hannon and Dempsey took care of voters at the St. Michaels Chapter house while Berchman took care of the Oak Springs Chapter.

“We teamed up because that is what the people wanted us to do,” Berchman said. He said that the three delegates work especially well together, which was important in pushing forth issues to the Council.

A total of 67 delegates were re-elected to their respective positions, according to the unofficial results of the Navajo Election Administration.