



DECEMBER 1, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mihio Manus, Sr. Public Information Officer
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PRESIDENT BEGAYE AND VICE PRESIDENT NEZ SIGN EXECUTIVE ORDER LAUNCHING SUICIDE PREVENTION INITIATIVE

Window Rock, AZ - On Monday, Nov. 30, the Office of the President and Vice President signed an Executive Order launching the "Building Communities of Hope" Initiative to bring awareness by implementing suicide prevention initiatives and offering help to the Navajo people.

The Executive Order states that the third week of December and second week of June shall be declared "Navajo Nation Suicide Prevention Week."

"It is our goal to welcome a new dawn by empowering individuals, families and communities to make positive choices to restore hope, self-sufficiency and determination," said President Russell Begaye. "We believe in providing our Navajo people with the means to cope with life's challenges and to never give up. Every life is precious."

At the signing, Vice President Jonathan Nez asked for tools to be brought forth from Navajo Nation departments to address the epidemic of suicide on the Navajo Nation. Although the topic of suicide is taboo within traditional perspectives of Navajo culture, he said a dialogue needs to take place within Navajo communities addressing suicide.

The initiative instructs all tribal departments to coordinate resources to address suicide prevention, response, and post-vention. It calls for suicide-related training to be given to Navajo Nation employees.

This effort is a comprehensive strategy to educate the Navajo people on suicide prevention services that exist on the Nation through a direct interface with the Navajo people. The theme of the suicide prevention initiative is "Building



Joined by Attorney General Ethel Branch, President Russell Begaye and Jonathan Nez signed an Executive Order today launching the "Building Communities of Hope" Initiative that addresses suicide prevention awareness.

Communities of Hope" which focuses on information and outreach.

Additionally, the Executive Order calls for the development of a social media campaign using electronic mediums such as a website, Facebook, or Twitter while engaging in traditional means of advertisement such as billboards and posters. The initiative serves to maximize avenues used to help Navajo people of all ages in a variety of ways.

Furthermore, all tribal buildings will be required to display the "Building Communities of Hope" official poster that will provide a helpline and information to anyone looking for help.

"We need to reinforce the traditional concepts of K'é and Hózhó in our Navajo communities," said President Begaye. "Among the youth, we need to let them know they have self-worth and

that liná is valuable. Everyone needs to hear something positive."

The week of December 14 - 19, 2015, begins the Suicide Prevention and Awareness Tour, whereby President Begaye and Vice President Nez are scheduled to visit nine Navajo communities along with departments and programs to share a message of hope, and to encourage attendees with supportive resources. These resources include on-site clinical specialists, motivational speakers and resource information.

A finalized tour schedule will be released soon.

For more information about the tour, please contact either Christopher Bahe or Yvonne Kee-Bilison at 928-871-7000, Office of the President and Vice President.

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EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 03-2015

**INITIATE THE "BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF HOPE" INITIATIVE TO
ORGANIZE A ONE NATION, ONE VOICE APPROACH TO ADDRESS
SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR OUR NAVAJO PEOPLE**

**THE NAVAJO NATION
EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 03-2015**

NOVEMBER 30, 2015

WHEREAS:

1. The President of the Navajo Nation serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation government with full authority to conduct, supervise, and coordinate personnel and program matters. 2 N.N.C. 1005 (A);
2. The President shall have the enumerated power of issuing an executive order for the purpose of interpreting, implementing or giving administrative effect to statutes of the Navajo Nation in the manner set forth in such statutes. 2. N.N.C. 1005(C)(14);
3. An executive order shall have the force of law upon the recipient. *Id.*

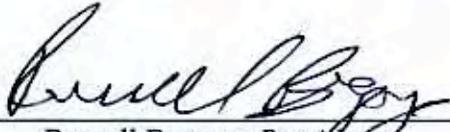
THEREFORE:

I, Russell Begaye, President of the Navajo Nation and I, Jonathan Nez, Vice-President of the Navajo Nation, by the authority vested in us, we hereby issue the following order:

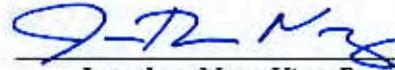
1. Establish the "Building Communities of Hope" Initiative, which is to bring hope back to our communities and awareness to suicide by organizing our Navajo Nation Government to develop a suicide prevention, response, and post-vention program.
2. The third week of December and second week of June shall be declared "Navajo Nation Suicide Prevention Week" this week shall be to bring awareness and education on this issue and include:

- a. Training for all Navajo Nation employees;
 - b. Divisions and Departments shall host, participate and initiate activities that carries out "Building Communities of Hope" Initiative; and
 - c. Support the Prevention Tour across the Navajo Nation to provide information and training to our People, from our children, youth, adults and our elders.
3. The Department of Health, Division of Social Services, Division of Public Safety and Department of Diné Education shall lead and are directed to initiate the "Building Communities of Hope" Initiative and any and all other Divisions, Department and Programs, as requested, shall share information and cooperate in the implementation of the "Building Communities of Hope". This will include:
- a. Collaborate and coordinate with the non-profit, national, tribal, non-tribal, federal, faith-based organizations and schools in implementing this Initiative, such as National Suicide Prevention LIFELINE and National organizations.
 - b. Develop a post-vention strategy, which may include subcontracting with technical teams.
 - c. Develop a Navajo Nation information poster to be disseminated across the Navajo Nation by December 10, 2015 that shall include a National Suicide Prevention LIFELINE and information on where people can seek help.
 - d. Develop a "Building Communities of Hope" website, social media campaign with Facebook, Twitter, and billboards, posters, cards that can provide information to our People such as a LIFELINE.
4. By December 18, 2015, all Divisions, Departments and Programs are directed and shall be required to post the "Building Communities of Hope" poster in a conspicuous location at the entrance of all Navajo Nation Government Buildings and Chapter Houses.
5. Responsibility for implementation. The Division/Department Directors and Chapter Managers are responsible for implementing and ensuring compliance with this order.
6. Consistency with other laws. The provisions of this order shall be implemented consistent with the laws of the Nation and highest welfare of the Navajo people.

EXECUTED this 30th day of November, 2015



Russell Begaye, *President*



Jonathan Nez, *Vice-President*

ATTEST;



Ethel Branch, *Attorney General*



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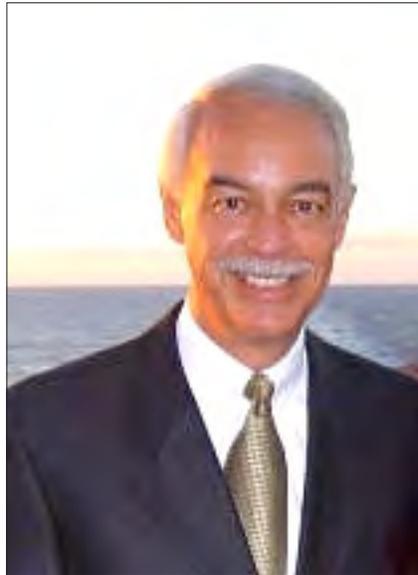
CONTROLLER OF THE NAVAJO NATION APPOINTED BY THE NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez are pleased to appoint Jim R. Parris as the Controller of the Navajo Nation. Parris is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a tribal member of the Osage Nation and the Cherokee Nation.

Parris has over 35 years of experience in accounting, auditing and management in tribal, federal and private sectors across the United States. Parris was the first Controller for the Osage Nation. He also served as the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer for the Cherokee Nation.

Aside from tribal experience, Parris worked many years at the U.S. Department of the Interior. Parris was the first Native American CPA to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior. He initiated the very first external audits by independent auditors to audit tribal: Individual Indian Monies, Alaska Native Escrow, Contributed Trust funds held by the BIA. He also contracted the first investment professionals to invest the BIA's trust investment program for tribal trust funds, including establishing the first Master Trust System to account for trust funds held by BIA.

Parris transitioned into the private sector as a sole practitioner in public accounting and consulting primarily supporting tribes. He has served on numerous Boards as the



Treasurer for Native American Finance Officer's Association, InterTribal Monitoring Association, Council of Energy Resource Tribes for Cherokee Nation, and the Indian Land Working Group. More recently, Parris has assisted over 20 tribes across the United States from Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Wyoming, Oregon, Montana, Washington, South Dakota and Wisconsin in trust litigation resulting in numerous successful settlements, including the Navajo Nation.

"We welcome Jim to the Navajo Nation. We know his experience and knowledge is vital in overseeing and protecting the Navajo

Nation's finances and assets and in helping build the portfolio of the Nation. It became challenging for our Administration in finding the right Controller as there are very few Navajo CPAs. Many are still sitting for their exams and most have just started in their career and wish to seek experience before returning home," said President Begaye.

Vice-President said that our objective is to not only bring home Navajos but train our Navajo people to give them more opportunities. Parris has made that commitment to the Navajo Nation. This is not a long-term career move for Parris, he is here to develop our Navajo people, help those who are seeking their CPA and accounting degrees and mentor the next Navajo Controller.

"I am happy to help and honored to be appointed as the Navajo Nation's Controller. This Administration has great vision and I am glad to be part of the team. Over these next few years, I will focus on mentorship and training for those within the Office of the Controller to be the next Controller for the Navajo Nation. I hope to see promotion within OOC, it is good to bring our Native people home, but we can't forget those here, said Jim Parris

Parris is also a Veteran, having served in the United States Navy from 1973 to 1976.

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DECEMBER 2, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VICE PRESIDENT NEZ CALLS FOR ATTENTION TO WATER RIGHTS, EDUCATION, AND MEDICAID IN TRIBAL CONSULTATION WITH GOVERNOR DUCEY



During a tribal consultation meeting with Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, Vice President Nez addressed the need to establish clear water rights for the Navajo Nation and develop the capacity to deliver adequate supplies of affordable water.

PHOENIX, AZ—During a meeting between Arizona tribal leaders and Governor Doug Ducey, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez told the Governor that when tribal nations are prosperous, Arizona is also prosperous.

Tribal leaders were afforded time to present issues facing their tribal communities before Governor Ducey in a consultation session held in the Monte Vista Room at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Ariz.

Vice President Nez called attention to water rights, increased resources for education, a Navajo specific Medicaid system and withdrawing Arizona's support of

the amicus brief in the *Dollar General Corporation vs. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians* case.

Vice President Nez noted the need to establish clear water rights for the Navajo Nation and develop the capacity to deliver adequate supplies of affordable water.

"It is a priority for the Navajo Nation to get back to the negotiating table to openly discuss its water rights relative to the Little Colorado and Colorado Rivers with all relevant parties. We look forward to working with you in bringing critical parties back to the table to find viable solutions to this major challenge for the Navajo Nation.

Be our champion on this issue," Vice President Nez said.

Vice President Nez affirmed that the Begaye-Nez administration supports language revitalization and cultural preservation among education systems on the Navajo Nation. A stable foundation for Native peoples in Arizona can be found in their indigenous languages, culture and traditions, he said.

He noted that budgets for education have faced cuts in recent years. In the short run, the fact is Navajo Nation cannot afford any further cuts in the education of our youth.

As with most rural school dis-

tricts, the Nation's school districts are struggling. Money is not the only challenge but it is a major challenge for schools that needs to be addressed.

"The Navajo Nation's leaders are working with Navajo education leaders to develop other recommendations focused on improving education for Native American students across Arizona. We look forward to meeting with you when our plan is refined to discuss it with you for your consideration," he said.

The Navajo Nation has developed a position on taking over its own Medicaid program. A feasibility study was conducted



Arizona Governor Doug Ducey (center) stands with Vice President Jonathan Nez (right) and Speaker Lorenzo Bates (left) at a tribal consultation meeting held at the Heard Museum on Monday, Nov. 30.

by the Navajo Division of Health in May 2014. The results of the study show that it would be feasible for the Navajo Nation to operate as a Medicaid Agency.

The study accessed the cross jurisdictional health care disparities, eligibilities, enrollment processes, amount of reimbursements, mandatory service and data access.

Based on the study, the Navajo Nation will call upon appropriate Federal agencies to support the feasibility planning design for a Navajo Nation Medicaid Agency.

"We have the professional capacity to do this," he said. "We need state support in pushing for Congressional approval on this issue."

Vice President Nez addressed an outcry within Indian Country over the *Dollar General Corporation vs. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians* case.

He reminded Governor Ducey of a letter the Navajo Nation had sent him regarding an amicus brief the State of Arizona had signed onto, filed by the State of Oklahoma.

The amicus brief dismisses tribal courts and suggests that state courts are, in all instances, the appropriate forums for tort-claims against non-Indians who harm tribal citizens on tribal lands. Vice President Nez said the state of Arizona has always recognized the jurisdiction

"It is a priority for the Navajo Nation to get back to the negotiating table to openly discuss its water rights relative to the Little Colorado and Colorado Rivers with all relevant parties. We look forward to working with you to find viable solutions to this major challenge for the Navajo Nation" - Vice President Nez

of tribal courts to prosecute crimes that take place on tribal lands.

"We respectfully ask that the State of Arizona withdraw from the State of Oklahoma's amicus brief," he said.

Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council Lorenzo Bates was in attendance and brought forth concerns regarding the Nation's energy issues, specifically coal-based revenues. Speaker Bates said that coal is a major industry for the Nation, in terms of both employment

and revenue.

"We look to you to advocate and promote the fact that the Navajo Nation has taken hits by shutting down several of our power plants. Yet, there continue to be more regulations handed down from the federal government."

Speaker Bates said he feels the Nation has gone above and beyond to comply with federal regulations. He called for State support in transitioning from coal-based to alternative forms of energy.

In closing, Vice President Nez extended the invitation from both himself and President Russell Begaye to visit the Navajo Nation.

He expressed appreciation to the Governor for bringing tribal leaders together for the purpose of consultation.

Governor Ducey acknowledged the issues presented by the many tribal leaders in attendance. He committed to fostering ongoing communication the Governor's Office and Arizona Indian nations.

"What I want to do is spend less time talking and more time working," Governor Ducey said. "This idea of consultation is important to me."

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THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

DECEMBER 4, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESIDENT BEGAYE ADVOCATED FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

WASHINGTON—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye called on support from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell to combat and address suicide in Indian Country through a summit to be hosted in the Navajo Nation. President Begaye and tribal leaders met over two-days during the Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee meeting.

"We are asking for a summit to be held to address suicide," the president said. In addition to a summit, the president called for a national anti-suicide campaign to reach Native youth through videos and social media. The videos could be designed and produced by Native youth.

President Begaye shared a recent executive order he signed with Vice President Nez that calls for Navajo Nation employees to be involved in preventing suicide in the Navajo Nation.

In the coming weeks, the president and his staff will begin a reservation wide tour that will include presentations on suicide prevention. "The vice president and I will visit Navajo communities and schools throughout the Navajo Nation to help build communities of hope," President Begaye said.

One of the challenges the president raised with Secretary Burwell was the lack of data on suicides in Indian Country and specifically the Navajo Nation. "We need data. No one is keeping adequate records, not only for those that do commit suicide, but also the attempted suicides. One suicide impacts a large community. How do we address and work with the communities impacted by this suicide? The data problems are compounded by the fact that we are situated within three states," the president said.

Secretary Burwell said the Indian Health Service is unable to provide complete data because they do not attend each suicide. She asked how local law enforcement collects data, and if there is regional consistency in reporting and if there are data sharing agreements between tribal and non-tribal public safety agencies.

Lastly, the president informed the secretary of a pilot project the U.S. Department of Justice is undertaking to knock down silos and concentrate funding to combat substance abuse. President Begaye advised the secretary to do something similar with regards to suicide.

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THE NAVAJO NATION

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DECEMBER 4, 2015
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PRESIDENT BEGAYE AND VICE PRESIDENT NEZ SIGN PROCLAMATION DECLARING THIRD WEEK OF DECEMBER AS SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK



WINDOW ROCK, AZ-On Friday, Dec. 4, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez signed a proclamation declaring the third week in December as Suicide Prevention Week.

The proclamation serves to provide impetus for Navajo Nation departments and communities to promote dialogue and awareness about suicide prevention and the prevention resources available throughout local communities.

"It is our goal to empower individuals, families and communities to make positive choices while restoring hope, self-sufficiency and determination," said President Russell Begaye. "The loss of one life is one too many."

During the week of December 14 - 19, 2015, President Begaye and Vice President Nez will begin the Communities of Hope tour addressing suicide prevention and awareness across the Navajo Nation. The tour is scheduled to stop at twelve Navajo high schools and a youth center.

For Native Americans of all age groups, suicide is the 8th leading cause of death. Realizing that public awareness forums are key in addressing suicide prevention, The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) signed an Executive Order on Nov. 30, launching an initiative instructing all tribal departments to coordinate resources to address suicide prevention, response, and post-vention.



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

This effort is a comprehensive strategy to educate Navajo communities on suicide prevention services that exist on the Nation through a direct interface with the Navajo people.

OPVP alongside tribal departments and programs will be visiting schools and communities addressing Navajo youth with educational messages about prevention measures. The tour will focus on sharing messages of hope, encouragement and supportive resources. These resources will include on-site clinical specialists, motivational speakers and resource information.

"We need to let the youth know they have self-worth and that their lives are valuable," said Vice President Nez. "By reaching out and visiting high schools across the Navajo Nation, we hope to provide a positive influence on Navajo youth while reinforcing the serious nature of suicide prevention."

The Communities of Hope tour scheduled is listed below. For more information about the tour, please contact either Christopher Bahe or Yvonne Kee-Billison at 928-871-7000, Office of the President and Vice President.

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COMMUNITIES OF HOPE TOUR SCHEDULE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2015

5:30 PM CROWNPOINT HIGH SCHOOL

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2015

9:00 AM SANDERS HIGH SCHOOL

1:30 PM WINSLOW HIGH SCHOOL

5:30 PM LEUPP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2015

9:00 AM ANETH HIGH SCHOOL

5:30 PM MONUMENT VALLEY SAC AUDITORIUM

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2015

9:00 AM WHITEHORSE (MONTEZUMA CREEK) HIGH SCHOOL

1:30 PM SHIPROCK HIGH SCHOOL

5:30 PM NEWCOMB HIGH SCHOOL

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2015

9:00 AM NAVAJO PINE HIGH SCHOOL

1:30 PM GANADO HIGH SCHOOL

5:30 PM OFFICE OF DINÉ YOUTH, FORT DEFIANCE, AZ

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2015

5:30 PM COCA COLA CLASSIC, WILDCAT DEN, CHINLE, AZ



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 7, 2015

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NAVAJO NATION MOURNS LOSS OF LEONARD HASKIE

WINDOW ROCK-It is with a heavy heart and great sorrow that the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) has learned today about the passing of one of our former leaders, Leonard Haskie.

"Today we learned that one of our former leaders, who had served both as a Navajo Nation Chairman and President, had passed away last night at Northern Navajo Medical Center in Shiprock, N.M. Leonard Haskie was a person with a wealth of knowledge that he used to advance the Navajo Nation toward a better future. It was a pleasure to serve with Leonard Haskie during my time as a council delegate on the 22nd Navajo Nation Council," said President Begaye.

Leonard Haskie was originally from Tsé'á'lnáoz't'í'í (Sanostee), New Mexico. His clans were Ta'neezahnii (Tangle People Clan), born for Táchii'nii (Red-Running-Into-The-Water Clan), his maternal grandfathers are Tódich'ii'nii (Bitter Water Clan), and his paternal grandfathers are Nakai Dine'é (Mexican Clan).

Former President Haskie was a great man who took the reigns in leading the Navajo Nation as interim chairman in 1989.

In his leadership capacity, he served as interim chairman, then president for two years. He was the tribe's first president under the amendments to Title 2 of the Navajo Tribal Code.

It was during Haskie's tenure as interim president that the 88-member tribal council and chairman's post were formally separated into two distinct legislative and executive branches. Previous to his tenure, the chairman sat on the council and controlled it.

During his term as interim president, Haskie reactivated the Navajo Labor Investigative Task Force (Task Force) by Executive Order. The Task Force deliberated on proposed amendments to the Navajo Preference and Employment Act, held public meetings to receive input from the Navajo people, and established a comprehensive understanding with organized labor.

One of Task Force's goals was to achieve higher quality and more numerous employment opportunities for Navajo people within the Nation and among neighboring communities.

The former president was a staunch supporter of education. Haskie held a bachelors and masters degree in civil engineering and was a licensed, professional engineer in the states of Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico for several years.

Beyond this, he also held a position as an assistant superintendent for support services for the Gallup-McKinley County School District.

Most recently, Haskie served as a council delegate.

During a special session in November 2014, the Navajo Nation Council welcomed Leonard Haskie as a newly appointed council delegate. Haskie represented the communities of Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'í'áhi/To'koi, Red Valley, Sheep Springs, Toadlena/ Two Grey Hills, Tsé'a'náoz't'í.

President Begaye said Haskie was a leader from, and of, the Navajo people. The president stated that Haskie's commitment in connecting with people at a grassroots level was testament to his effective leadership capacity.

Looking back at the political career Leonard Haskie had undertaken in tribal government and education in, OPVP would like to express its deepest gratitude to his family. The Office thanks him for his service toward enhancing the great Navajo Nation.

"It was an honor to sit with him on council. I learned a great deal from him," said Vice President Nez. "We ask the Navajo People to pray for him and his community."

At this time, the OPVP calls upon the Navajo people for prayers for the family as they mourn and remember the life of Leonard Haskie. The Office stands by the family in their time of grief and OPVP also pays tribute in honoring a great Diné man and Navajo Nation leader.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez will issue a proclamation in honor of Leonard Haskie to have all flags flown at half-mast on Friday, Dec. 11.

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THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 10, 2015

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PRESIDENT BEGAYE SAYS SEPARATING NAVAJO CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS AND FAMILIES IS DEVASTATING



"We need to make sure that every Navajo child in state custody or foster care doesn't have to go through life wondering who they are or who their parents are," President Russell Begaye said during his speech that opened the NDSS and Casey Family Program's Navajo Child Work Session.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM-During the opening banquet for Navajo Division of Social Service and Casey Family Program's Navajo Child Work Session in Albuquerque on Monday, President Russell Begaye called for the absolute protection of Navajo children in his support of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

"There is nothing more devastating than seeing a Navajo child being taken from their parents. The connection that exists between a child and their parent is strong. It's a sacred bond. In our support of the ICWA, we are protecting the connection between children, their parents and siblings," President Begaye said.

Last week, President Begaye delivered a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell asking for her to support ICWA in enforcing that state courts investigate and verify the enrollment of Native American children in cases regarding custody and foster care.

President Begaye talked about the boarding school era in the history of Native Americans to emphasize the historical trauma caused by the separation of Indian children from their families, culture and lan-



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

guage. Both President Begaye and his brothers attended boarding school as young men.

“Imagine your identity being erased. Imagine not being able to see your mother and father. Imagine knowing you have family but not being able to see them. The separation is too much,” he said. “Now imagine children who are separated from their families and cultures for the entirety of their lives.”

On July 7th of this year, ICWA came under fire when the Goldwater Institute filed a proposed class-action lawsuit in federal district court in Arizona challenging the constitutionality of ICWA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) guidelines that strengthen this legislation.

The Goldwater lawsuit has sparked a national discussion questioning the purpose of ICWA. It is the position of the Navajo Nation that tribes, states and partners do everything they can to advocate for this legislation which protects tribe’s connection to Native American children.

President Begaye said the lawsuit portrays the lifeways of Native Americans as being insignificant while also portraying tribal communities as substandard. For non-Natives, the lawsuit could be interpreted as compelling.

“It makes you think about the issue in the questions it raises,” he said. “Rather than go down that road, we, as Native Americans, need to know that we are just as good as anybody else.”

The Goldwater lawsuit is a fight for the soul of tribal nations, he said. It challenges the equality of tribal nations against non-tribal paradigms of societal standards not based in traditional culture or knowledge.

“Our traditional ways nurture our children and foster environments that are conducive to the success of our children. Navajo culture inherently protects the future generations as it does the elders.”

President Begaye expressed his gratitude to all departments in attendance, as well as the Health Education and Human Services Committee and Law & Order Committee delegates, for coming together to support and address the importance of ICWA in keeping Navajo children with Navajo families. He called for the Nation’s continued support of ICWA and for tribes to stand against the Goldwater Institute’s lawsuit, which questions the constitutionality of



Members of the Health Education and Human Services Committee and Law & Order Committee joined with NDSS and Casey Family Programs to address Navajo Child Welfare at a work session held Dec. 7-8 at Sandia Hotel and Resort in Albuquerque, NM.

the Act.

“Native Americans are just as good as any other society on earth. We love our families and will stand with them,” he said. “We need to make sure that every Navajo child in state custody or foster care doesn’t have to go through life wondering who they are or who their parents are.”

During the following morning’s agenda, Vice President Jonathan Nez presented a welcoming address to the work session that supported President Begaye’s position while also supporting positive, healthy families and homes on the Nation. The vice president also extended gratitude to the partners who organized the conference.

Regarding the Goldwater Institute’s lawsuit, Vice President Nez supports the need for all tribal nations to come forth with strong messages supporting ICWA. He said there is a the need for the Nation to develop a strong strategy in combating the Goldwater Institute’s messaging and media campaign.

“What they are doing is chipping away at the sovereign rights of Native Americans which can eventually extend beyond ICWA,” Vice President Nez said. “What the Goldwater Institute is doing is wrong.”

Both President Begaye and Vice President Nez voiced support of ICWA and the protection of Indian children by keeping them with Native American families.

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JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

December 16, 2015

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COUNCIL MOVES TO OVERRIDE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE IN CHALLENGING LINE-ITEM VETO AUTHORITY

Tomorrow, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee will hold a special session to discuss overriding, limiting and amending the line-item veto authority of the President of the Navajo Nation.

"There is nothing to debate tomorrow. The line-item veto authority was given to the President directly by the People, only the People can limit and clarify this authority. This is not a question for the Navajo Nation Council, this is a question only the Navajo people can answer. I have asked in my veto message that the Council should not challenge the voice and vote of the People. That will continue to be my message," said President Russell Begaye.

On Nov. 12, President Begaye vetoed the legislation as it attempts to amend the President's line-item veto authority that is contrary to the 2009 initiative. The initiative passed by the People clearly states that amendments to the line-item veto authority can only be by the initiative process. In other words, only the Navajo People can change this authority. It is not an authority that can be limited or amended by the Navajo Nation Council.

The line-item veto was part of an initiative pursued in 2008, by former President Joe Shirley, Jr. to bring governmental fiscal responsibility back to the Navajo Nation. On December 15, 2009, the Navajo People voted "yes" to give line-item veto authority to the Navajo Nation President. On June 25, 2010, former President Shirley made history and exercised the President's first line-item veto.

Since that time, this authority has been exercised many times over by President Shirley, former President Ben Shelly and more recently by President Begaye.

THE AMENDMENT:

The initiative passed by the Navajo People states "budget items" in the "Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget and supplemental appropriations" are subject to line-item veto. The Navajo Nation Council is attempting to amend the President's line-item veto from "budget items" to only the "numeric appropriated dollar amount".

"Any direct impact to the budget are "budget items" which include set asides, waivers, and conditions of appropriations. The Navajo people passed this initiative to stop wasteful spending and ensure government fiscal responsibility and efficiency. This amendment can easily be used to manipulate the budget by hiding appropriations in other parts of the budget where the President's line-item veto authority is attempting to be removed. This is contrary to the initiative passed by the Navajo people," said Vice-President Jonathan Nez.

"I understand the legislation was the result of long hours in developing title two amendments to address and clarify Legislative processes. However, to limit and amend the President's line-item veto authority was never part of those discussions but instead, it was introduced on the Council floor. I respectfully ask the Council to withdraw the override legislation and to re-introduce the legislation as this Administration supports those efforts," said President Begaye

If the Council wants clarification on the Navajo people's initiative, the question should be posed to them. We have not seen one chapter resolution nor any support to limit the President's line-item veto authority. In fact, we have received many messages from our People stating that this is for the People to decide not the Council nor the President.

"The Vice-President and I will continue to fight and protect the voice of the Navajo people. For it is the Navajo people who have elected and entrusted us to be their voice, to represent them and to advocate on their behalf," said President Begaye

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THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 16, 2015

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BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF HOPE TOUR KICKS OFF AT THOREAU HIGH SCHOOL



High rates of suicide across Native America and the Navajo Nation have warranted OPVP to address the epidemic by organizing the *Building Communities of Hope* tour. At Thoreau High School, Vice President Nez reinforced that the students are loved and important.

THOREAU-The Building Communities of Hope Tour, which is an initiative undertaken by the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) and departments of the Executive branch, kicked off a six-day tour on Monday, Dec. 14 at Thoreau High School. The tour aims to bring suicide prevention awareness to schools and communities across the Navajo Nation.

As high rates of suicide across Native America and the Navajo Nation indicate, suicide is an epidemic that warrants immediate attention. OPVP has taken measures to address this epidemic through organizing the Building Communities of Hope Tour.

“Our youth will lead us into the future. We must do everything we can to let them know they are special and they are loved. We need to protect our youth and continue to instill positivity and self-confidence in them,” said President Russell Begaye.

As the tour got underway at Thoreau High School, Vice President Nez said. “In this six-day tour, we are hitting the road to show the Navajo people that we mean business. One life taken is one life too many in our eyes.”

Jessie McKenzie and TJ Anderson of the Department of Behavioral Health Service (DBHS) led the program with a presentation addressing questions and answers about suicide prevention and awareness.

McKenzie posed a direct question, “Are you thinking about hurting yourself or killing yourself?”

She went on to tell the students that if they are hurting, they really need to voice their pain and talk with someone they trust or feel they can confide in.

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions,” she said. “Speak up, reach out and know that you are not alone. Seek help from an adult you trust and don’t give up. Keep asking until someone helps you.”

Both McKenzie and Anderson recommended that the affected youth should speak with teachers, school counselors, nurses, parents or friends. In critical situations, those who are considering suicide, and those who know someone that might be considering suicide, should call the nearest Navajo Nation Police Department dispatch and provide adequate information.

Echohawk Lefthand, a motivational speaker from Red Mesa, said that suicide has been a big problem in the area where he comes



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT



The gymnasium at Thoreau High school was filled with students and administrative faculty along with staff from presenting departments.

from. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem, he told the students.

“We all go through problems and we all face difficult situations in our lives,” he said. “When we take difficult situations and turn them into positive things, we are able to grow through them.”

Lefthand shared that within the last two months, he lost one of his best friends to suicide. His friend was a positive person who had great charisma. He wasn’t someone who seemed like he would consider suicide.

“He told me that he had been thinking about suicide and I couldn’t believe it,” he said. “I asked him, ‘How can you think like this?’”

Ultimately Lefthand’s friend took his own life, which in turn caused Lefthand to fall into depression. The impacts of suicide among the victim’s family and friends can be lingering, deep-rooted and traumatic.

The tour’s presentation included support and counseling services for those who have lost loved ones. Lefthand talked about his need to seek counseling in dealing with the grief he was feeling. Resources are available and were part of the topics discussed.

“The only way to get over depression is to go through it. You’re going to cry but you have to go through it,” he said.

Dominic Romero, Head Principal at Thoreau High School, said the Building Communities of Hope tour was of critical importance as it let the students know that the Navajo Nation cares about them and that their lives are truly special.

“This is huge and it’s important because we don’t know what a lot of these kids go through with their families. Even though they might not be suicidal, possibly someone in their family has been affected by suicide. Bringing in the Navajo Nation and other Native Americans to talk about it is a huge part of awareness. Being able to have a child come in and talk with somebody is vital and it will save a life,” said Principal Romero.

Organizer of the tour and Executive Assistant with OPVP, Yvonne Billison said the numbers of suicides on the Navajo Nation are high and the OPVP hopes to affect these numbers by bringing them down.

“We are going to need everyone’s help to do this,” she said. “This



Vice President Jonathan Nez (center) stands with Building Communities of Hope tour presenters and staff from supporting departments.



OPVP Executive Staff Assistant and organizer of the tour, Yvonne Kee Billison said the subject of suicide is a tough one but a dialogue needs to start to combat it.

is a really tough subject and it impacts all of us. However, we all have choices and through outreach and available resources, we can make everything better for ourselves.”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 22, 2015

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PLANTING SEEDS OF HOPE THROUGH COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION

NAVAJO NATION-Starting on Monday, Dec. 14, the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) set out with several tribal programs and departments to initiate dialogue about suicide prevention awareness throughout Navajo communities.

The initiative known as the Building Communities of Hope tour made 13 stops across the Navajo Nation in schools, community centers and basketball games.

In addition to starting a community dialogue about suicide prevention and awareness, the tour's intent was to spread hope by reinforcing positivity.

At the tour's visit to Winslow High School, President Russell Begaye asked the students to repeat positive statements about themselves.

"I am special. I am beautiful. I am valuable," they repeated.

President Begaye promoted the virtues of self-confidence and self-love against degradation and despair.

"Hope has so much value because it means that you're looking beyond your current situation," he said. "Hang on to hope and you will cherish your life."

The need for dialogue about suicide prevention was rein-

forced by Superintendent of Kayenta Unified School District, Dr. Bryce Anderson. The superintendent said the community had suffered the terrible tragedy of a murder-suicide only two days before the tour's stop in the town.

The tragedy underscored the critical need for the tour's messaging and available resources to be brought into the community.

"This is an epidemic that is not often spoken about and we need to tear down these walls and communicate about it," he said. "It's going to be critical to build on these resources from here."

For many Navajo people, talking about suicide is taboo.

"There is a cultural reluctance by the Navajo people to discuss death, especially taking your own life. We must break down this barrier and bring suicide prevention to the forefront if we are to save lives on the Navajo Nation," Vice President Nez said. "The discussions need to begin at home."

The intergenerational connection between elders and youth must be strengthened, he added, noting that Navajo teachings hold human life sacred. These cultural teachings will only fortify the bond be-



At the tour's stop at Leupp Public School, President Russell Begaye encouraged parents to reinforce their children with positive messages.

tween Navajo elders and youth, especially since the winter season is the time for Navajo creation stories.

Yet as the dialogue is ignored, the Navajo Nation continues to lose people to suicide. The vice president said not knowing how to address suicide could only further harm communities.

At every stop on the tour, a local professional, counselor or doctor would present tools and strategies to facilitate discussion and offer local resources, counseling services and contact lists.

In Thoreau, Jessie McKenzie and TJ Anderson of the Department of Behavioral Health Service said when dealing with a troubled individual, it's best to ask direct questions while being understanding when lis-

tening to them. The team reinforced not being judgmental or blaming.

"You're not a loser because you are hurting," McKenzie said. "Seek help from people you trust and keep asking until someone helps you. Don't give up."

Navajo comedian and motivational speaker, Pax Harvey joined the tour at Navajo Pine High School and continued through the final destination of the Coca Cola Classic basketball tournament at the Wildcat Den in Chinle, Ariz.

In Kayenta, he spoke seriously about dealing with grief and depression from his own experience in having recently lost his brother to suicide.

"You don't know what grief or sorrow is until you've lost a



Members of OPVP's Building Communities of Hope tour worked alongside students from the Ganado High School Student Council to help facilitate the event at the school. The student council were instrumental in assisting with the presentation's discussion.

loved one," he said.

When grief struck hardest, Harvey said the teachings of his grandmother helped to carry him through. His grandmother instilled in him the virtues of getting up early and running to the east before the sun rose. She told him this discipline would prepare him for difficult times in his life.

Beyond traditional teachings, Harvey also encouraged seeking help in combatting depression.

"Depression can sneak up on you. We're taught that you're not supposed to cry or

be emotional. That's how some of us were raised," he said. "Don't be ashamed to ask for help. The only way to get through pain is to hit it dead on. You have to go through it and deal with it"

OPVP Executive staff assistant and organizer of the tour, Yvonne Kee Billison said addressing suicide at the community level is tough, yet the impacts it has on communities can be devastating.

"We need to bring the numbers down because right now the numbers are high. To do this we are going to need everyone's

help," she said. "We have choices and we can make everything better for ourselves. Each of us needs to know our lives are worth living."

Because even the loss of one life is one too many, Billison said she and several assisting departments would continue to schedule presentations from requesting school and communities across the Navajo Nation. For more information please contact Yvonne Kee-Billison or Christopher Bahe at (928) 871-7000.

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Navajo comedian and motivational speaker Pax Harvey utilized comedy and audience participation exercises to address both suicide prevention awareness and reinforcing hope within communities. The tour brought its message of hope to the Winter Classic Basketball Tournament in Ft. Wingate.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 22, 2015

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NAVAJO STUDENTS AMONG GRADUATES AT FORT LEWIS COLLEGE'S WINTER 2015 COMMENCEMENT

FORT LEWIS COLLEGE-Before the winter commencement ceremony began at Fort Lewis College (FLC), Wilhelmina Manheimer stood with her class in anticipation outside of the Whalen Gymnasium.

Manheimer was one of many Navajo students who would graduate on Saturday, Dec. 19 at FLC's Winter 2015 Commencement held in Durango, Colo. She received a bachelor of arts in anthropology.

On behalf of the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez attended the commencement ceremony and said he was proud to see so many Navajos among the graduating class.

In emphasizing the importance of higher education, Vice President Nez said a bachelor degree has become a standard requirement to gaining employment.

"Continuing your education provides you tools that reinforce your skill set while broadening the scope of your abilities," he said. "The Begaye-Nez administration supports continued education as a way to continually move the Navajo Nation forward."

The college was originally established in 1911 as an agricultural high school. Currently, it is a public liberal arts college that offers tuition-free education to Native Americans. FLC offers 32 baccalaureate programs and a masters of arts in education program.

Karen Wilde, Board of Trustees for FLC, noted that the college's alumni include Acoma Pueblo writer Simon Ortiz and Congressman Scott Tipton.

"Never give up," she said. "You had a vision that brought you to our school. Now follow it."

Dr. Lee Frazer, Assistant Professor of the Department of Adventure Education delivered graduation remarks. His advice for students was to think outside the box and "not be bound



Hundreds of students lined the sidewalks outside of the Whalen Gymnasium before Fort Lewis College's Winter 2015 Commencement was set to begin on Saturday, Dec. 19. Navajo student Wilhelmina Manheimer graduated and received a bachelor of arts in anthropology.

by your studies".

"Let your life speak by recognizing and following your interest and passions. There is an importance in taking risks as life begins at the edge of comfort zones."

When FLC President Dr. Dene Kay presented the candidates for graduation, she asked the class to stand and cross their tassels from right to left signifying their recognition as the College's 2015 winter graduates.

This year's 53rd graduating class totaled 215 students.

Among the Navajo graduates was Amanda McNeil who received a bachelor of arts in psychology. McNeil thanked her parents for their

support.

"I'm so happy to be done," she said.

When the 2015 Winter Commencement was over, FLC's cannon fired a shot from the school's lawn to celebrate the graduating class.

While crowds of families gathered outside the Whalen Gymnasium for photos, Vice President Nez took the opportunity to congratulate many Navajo graduates.

Both President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez extend their congratulations to the 2015 winter graduating class of Fort Lewis College.

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Curran Hannon, President
Alfred Mike, Sr., Vice-President
Gloria Smiley, Secretary/Treasurer
Jonathan Hale, Council Delegate
Joseph Peshlakai, Grazing Official
Donna Whitehair, CSC
Teresa Tabaha, AMS

Russell Begay, Navajo Nation President

Jonathan Nez, Navajo Nation Vice President

Dec. 23, 2015

For Immediate Release

On Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2015 the Gallup Independent Newspaper published an article with inaccurate information titled "Budget befuddlement: St. Michaels Chapter approves wrong carryover budget, moves forward (Dec. 22, 2015);" which is misinforming the St. Michaels Community.

The Housing Committee budget was not passed. It was tabled at a community member's request. There was no reason stated for the motion to table the budget but the voting members of the community supported the motion.

News Reporter Marley Shebala claims to have retrieved the budget from Chapter Secretary/Treasurer Gloria Smiley; which was attached to a resolution. However, the policy and procedure according to the Navajo Nation Code, Title 26, is to submit the budget with a passed resolution in a package along with the minutes from the meeting.

The Records Management Policies and Procedures states that the Chapter "Secretary/Treasurer shall turn over to the St. Michaels Chapter Manager, within ten (10) working days, any official actions by the St. Michaels Chapter Membership, including all resolutions, minutes and other official documents, for proper record keeping and for carrying out any St. Michaels Chapter directive(s)."

There are no supporting resolutions supporting the Housing Committee budget.

The Chapter Administration budget for \$830,422.33; which is the carryover for the General Fund and Special Revenue Fund, did pass with majority vote. The vote to pass this budget is have the chapter move forward with payments.

For more information and/or to schedule an interview please contact St. Michaels Chapter Community Service Coordinator Donna Whitehair at 928-871-7842 or e-mail stmichaels@navajochapters.org.



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 28, 2015

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PRESIDENT BEGAYE AND VICE PRESIDENT NEZ AFFIRM THE VOICE OF THE NAVAJO PEOPLE IN CONTINUING TO SUPPORT THE LINE-ITEM VETO

WINDOW ROCK-On Wednesday, Dec. 30, the Navajo Nation Council will hold a special session with the intent to override the Navajo Nation President's line-item veto authority granted through referendum by the Navajo people. The legislation is sponsored by Honorable Alton Joe Shepherd.

This legislation was previously vetoed by President Begaye on Nov. 12 as it attempts to amend the President's line-item veto authority.

On December 15, 2009, the Navajo People voted on an initiative that would empower the Navajo Nation President with line-item veto authority. The text of the initiative is as follows:

"The President of the Navajo Nation will be authorized to exercise line item veto authority over budget items contained in the annual Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget or supplemental appropriation approved by the Navajo Nation Council. Budget line items vetoed by the President of the Navajo Nation will not be subject to Navajo Nation Council override.....If approved, this initiative may be repealed or amended by the initiative process only."

In 2009, the intent of the line-item veto initiative was to protect the government from wasteful spending and ensure governmental fiscal efficiency and responsibility. Nowhere in the language approved by the Navajo people does the initiative state that the president's line-item veto authority is limited to numeric dollar amounts.

As such, the line-item veto authority encompasses all aspects of the budget and not just the immediate appropriations, but also those budget items with a future impact, such as conditions of appropriations (COA).

President Begaye has stated that COAs can be manipulated to earmark or direct the Executive Branch to appropriate funds without placing numerical figures to them.

"In one instance, percentages were used in an ambiguous way to appropriate dollars to a COA. Without the line-item veto, this spending percentage for a certain project would have remained. For us to exhibit fiduciary responsibility based on the voice of the people, the President's line-item veto authority helps us to exercise more financially sound and responsible spending."

In a press release issued by the Office of the Speaker, the Naabik'iyati Committee stated the proposed legislation seeks to clarify the president's line-item veto authority, streamline the legislative process by amending the President's line-item veto authority "only to the numeric appropriated dollar amount".

President Begaye said this is completely contrary to the plain language of the initiative passed by the Navajo people. The initiative clearly states "budget items" in the "Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget and supplemental appropriations" are subject to "line item vetoes". It does not say "numeric dollar amounts".

"Only the People can limit and clarify this authority," said President Begaye. "This is not a question for the

Navajo Nation Council. This is a question that only the Navajo people can answer.”

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lorenzo Bates has called upon OPVP to find a reasonable solution.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez have previously proposed a compromise by agreeing to sign into law Title Two amendment’s legislation as originally recommended and submitted by the Title Two Subcommittee. Vice President Nez said that Council’s reluctance to consider the compromise is evident in moving the legislation forward to Wednesday’s meeting.

The Begaye-Nez administration continues to support the voice of the Navajo people and would like to thank the Council delegates who also voted in support of the voice of the Navajo people as it pertains to the line-item veto authority.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 28, 2015
For additional information, please contact:

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Mr. Arlando S. Teller Appointed to Arizona Transportation Board

Window Rock, AZ – State Senator Carlyle W. Begay (Legislative District 7) announced the selection of Mr. Arlando S. Teller to the Arizona State Transportation Board. Board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate with Arizona's transportation districts each represented by a board member. Mr. Teller, the Program Manager for the Navajo Division of Transportation (Navajo DOT) Department of Airports Management, will represent District 5, which covers Apache, Coconino, and Navajo Counties. The Arizona State Transportation Board is responsible for establishing a complete system of state highway routes in Arizona; awards construction contracts; determines priority program planning with respect to transportation facilities; annually adopts the five-year construction program; and distributes monies appropriated from the State Aviation Fund for planning, design, development, land acquisition, construction, and improvement of publicly owned airport facilities.

A six-year veteran of Navajo DOT, Mr. Teller worked as a senior transportation planner prior to assuming the management of the Nation's airports. Among his proudest accomplishments is his role in strengthening the ADOT/Navajo DOT partnership with counties, neighboring tribes, and regional planning organizations. He also worked with legislators to amend an Arizona statute allowing tribes to participate in the state's Aviation Improvement Program. Prior to assuming his responsibilities for Navajo DOT, Mr. Teller was a Native American liaison and transportation planner for the California Department of Transportation. Mr. Teller has a diverse and varied transportation background. His experience includes working for Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and Mesa Falcon Field Airport, in addition to inter-city transit planning in the San Francisco Bay Area. Mr. Teller possesses a comprehensive grasp of multi-modal transportation planning systems, which he uses to significantly enhance the planning, management, and development of northern Arizona's rural transportation infrastructure.

Through the encouragement of his family, Arlando left the reservation to pursue his Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Business Administration from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He is the first Navajo graduate of the university and among the first American Indian graduates. He is a descendant of a Navajo Code Talker, and he is educated in traditional Navajo culture and language.

When Senator Begay announced his appointment at the Navajo Nation Western Agency Council Meeting, Mr. Teller shared, "I am humbled for this opportunity and sincerely appreciate the support from the Arizona Capitol to my mother's fireplace."



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 30, 2015

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PRESIDENT BEGAYE AND VICE PRESIDENT NEZ HONOR THE VOICES OF THE NAVAJO PEOPLE

WINDOW ROCK- President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez were in prompt attendance at 10 a.m. for today's special session of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council that addressed legislation in which Council was attempting to override and amend the presidential line-item veto authority.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez waited nearly an hour for the meeting to be called to order but had to leave soon after to attend to previously arranged obligations.

In an unusual turn of events, Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, Lorenzo Bates excused himself from his role as Speaker to actively vote in favor of the legislation. In his absence he delegated Honorable Jonathan Hale as Speaker pro tem.

Yet the legislation failed with a vote of 10 yea, 12 nay and 2 not voting.

"We want to express our deepest appreciation to the people of the Navajo Nation who today defended their right to speak, be heard and not be overwritten by their elected officials," said President Begaye.

The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) would like to extend their appreciation to the twelve delegates that stepped forward and stood with the people by voting against the legislation. By doing so, these delegates have reaffirmed their support of the people who elected them into office.

"Today, twelve delegates acknowledged that the voice of the people supersedes anything that any elected official does. This includes council delegates themselves," said Vice President Nez. "We express a deep appreciation for those delegates that supported the people's voice."

As OPVP moves forward, the Office will continue to support the efforts of the Navajo people in moving the nation forward.

"Again, today the people won," said President Begaye. "They stood strong, they united and continued to demand that their voices be heard by their delegates. It is from the Navajo people that we should always generate any type of decision that we make."

In his introductory remarks, legislation sponsor Alton Joe Shepherd called into question President Begaye's usage of the line-item veto authority in legislation requesting funding for St. Michael's Special Education Schools.

"When the St. Michaels group brought the proposal over, we went through it with them. I told them that the Navajo Nation does not normally fund non-profit organizations because they, as non-profits, have access to multitudes of funding sources that the Navajo Nation government entities do not," said President Begaye.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez told them specifically that they would approve certain items they felt were pertinent to the continued operation of the school. They also told them specifically which items they would disapprove of.

"I reassured them that I would not sign off on every item that was in the proposal. That was the understanding we developed before they left."

Therefore, when line item veto transpired, St Michael's administration was well informed.

"In fact, I approved more items than I originally said I would. So I gave them several hundred thousands of dollars more than I said."

Delegate Shepherd also said that despite council's request to meet about the line-item veto override legislation, no meetings ever transpired.

Vice President Nez said he indeed had met with Speaker Bates and Delegate Shepherd to specifically address the line item veto override and discuss any possible compromises.

"We had met to specifically discuss the line-item veto. When they asked, 'What's the compromise?', I asked them what they wanted. There was no response," said Vice President Nez. "I said I guess there is nothing to talk about then. Also, we gave them a compromise in the letter we sent to the Naabik'iyati (NABI) committee meeting."

The letter dated Dec.17 was delivered to NABI by OPVP ambassador Peterson Zah. It responded to Speaker Bates' Dec. 7 letter asking to find a resolution or compromise in moving the amendments to the Title Two legislation.

The letter clearly states, "I agree to sign into law the Title Two amendment's legislation as originally recommended and submitted by the Title Two Subcommittee."

On a positive note, President Begaye said, "Vice President and I had the opportunity to go back to our former place of service, the historic Navajo Nation Council Chambers. We had an opportunity to talk with a number of delegates and have very cordial exchanges on various issues."

"We want to thank the public for protecting their voice on the authority given to the Navajo Nation president to override irresponsible spending of Navajo Nation monies," President Begaye said. "We also appreciate the delegates that stood behind the voice of the people."

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 31, 2015**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE
PRESIDENT**

As we near the end of 2015, both Vice President Jonathan Nez and I would like to send our heartfelt holiday greetings and appreciation to the staff of our administration, the three branches of government, all of the Navajo Nation Employees and the greater Navajo Nation. We thank you, we truly appreciate your assistance to our administration this year and most importantly, we love you.

Since we took office back in May 2015, our commitment toward bettering the lives and communities of the Navajo people has been diligent and consistent. We have traveled across the Navajo Nation visiting chapters and communities while listening to requests for services and infrastructure needs.

We have taken legislation directly to chapters for signing ceremonies because we know how hard the community members, delegates and chapter officials have worked to bring funding to their communities to make positive changes. We feel it's important to personally acknowledge these endeavors and support them wholeheartedly.

We recognize the needs to renovate chapter houses and community buildings to accommodate larger capacities and bring buildings into safety code and regulations. These buildings often provide safe places for youth activities and elders. Our administration values both youth and elders in providing for our future and preserving our culture and traditions.

We see our people residing in rural areas that have lived without water or electricity for years. The roads they travel need repair and we hear their calls for road improvement in getting our Navajo children to school safely or our elders to the store for supplies and for emergency services to our people. These concerns are being addressed.

As we've listened and observed, we have also assessed and evaluated. We have brought these concerns back to the Capitol to discuss them with the Executive Branch divisions to develop plans to bring tangible change to these issues.

Our efforts to bring change, development and improvements to the Nation have taken us across the Navajo Nation, every state the Nation encompasses and Washington D.C. to meet with Senators, Governors, Congressmen and even President Barack Obama to advocate on behalf of Navajo issues and rights.

Our interactions with key politicians have been meaningful and opened doors for us to improve programs on the Nation that affect each and every one of our lives. We lobby and advocate for the issues you've brought forth and we will keep the intent of our travels to be purposeful and directed.

Our purpose remains to create tangible change for the livelihood of the Navajo People.

As we look back on this year, we see the many great strides we've made which have been the culminated efforts of multiple departments, programs and divisions. This support is critical and appreciated.

Looking forward, we know there is much work still to be done and our efforts will remain diligent, productive and consistent. That is our commitment and responsibility to the Navajo People.

We ask that you please make time before year end to visit your relatives and elders across the Nation. Check up on your grandparents and elders to make sure they have enough wood for their stoves and water for themselves and their livestock. Take them to the store. Let them know they are loved and not forgotten.

Sometimes all our elders need is a little attention and that carries them a long way.

Also, take some time to bring everyone in the home together around the dinner table to talk about what is happening within each other lives. Put away the cell phones, tablets and gaming devices for one meal to talk and listen to one another.

Winter is our storytelling season, so it is very appropriate to share stories with one another and even have grandma or grandpa hand down some traditional knowledge. Let's listen to one another and share our love and camaraderie with each other during this season.

Let's always remember to honor our K'é and live according to Hozhó. Happy New Year from the Office of the President and Vice President!

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Smooth Confirmation for New Leadership at Navajo DOT



New Navajo DOT Director Garret Silversmith poses in front of the Navajo Nation Council Chambers after his confirmation.

December 31 – Window Rock, AZ

Yesterday, in a 14-1 vote without debate, the Navajo Nation Council confirmed Garret Silversmith as the new Director of the Navajo Division of Transportation. Mr. Silversmith will replace Darryl Bradley, the Division's Principal Engineer who has been serving as the acting division director since May. Mr. Silversmith comes to Navajo DOT from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Chinle Agency Transportation/Roads Program, where he has worked since 2012.

Over the course of his

career Mr. Silversmith has worked as a project engineer for the Navajo Housing Authority; a staff engineer with Nations Gas Technologies; a civil engineer for Bighorse Engineers; and a supervisory highway engineer for the Chinle Agency BIA.

Mr. Silversmith has cultivated an intimate knowledge of the Navajo Nation's infrastructure and has extensive experience with many of the Nation's existing transportation partners, including state and federal agencies.

A resident of Keams

Canyon, AZ, Mr. Silversmith understands the importance of working with local communities to understand and address their infrastructure needs. He has represented the Chinle Agency Transportation Program at chapter meetings, as well county, state, tribal, and federal engagements. When he reports to work on January 11th, he will emphasize community engagement on day one.

In addition to his community outreach, Mr. Silversmith has a broad range of engineering

experience across projects ranging from highway and housing subdivision design to airport runway and site design.

Mr. Silversmith earned his B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1993 from New Mexico State University. He enjoys spending time with his wife and three daughters as well as reading history topics, watching NFL games, and horseback riding.

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THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

Public Service Announcement
Public Hearing

For Immediate Release

December 31, 2015

GALLUP – The Navajo Nation Department of Veterans Affairs and the Office of the President and Vice-President will be hosting a follow-up Public Hearing regarding the Navajo Nation Veterans Act 2016.

The University of New Mexico-Gallup
College Drive
Student Services and Technology Building
Conference Room
Gallup, NM 87301
Thursday, January 7th, 2016
10 AM to 2 PM

For more information contact Jamescita
Peshlakai jpeshlakai@navajo-nsn.gov Phone: 928-871-
7907 Fax: 928-871-4025 or your Agency Commander
Your comments are important and we strongly encourage your
attendance

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