Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., vetoes ‘Decentralization Project’ as duplication of whole divisions, fostering separatist approach

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., today vetoed the proposed “Western Navajo Agency Decentralization Pilot Project” because it is unknown to the People, would duplicate existing services, would drain financial resources from other agencies, and would foster a separatist approach to governing.

“It is irrefutable that this resolution fosters a separatist approach to governing and acquiring governmental services that are already provided for under the current system,” President Shirley wrote in his veto message to Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan.

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He said the huge costs associated with replicating whole divisions, departments and services that are already provided is unknown, have had no review or analysis by the Office of Management and Budget, and could potentially jeopardize existing federal grant agreements.

Most of the programs identified in the pilot project are federally-funded and administered by the respective Executive Branch division directors, he said.

However, nowhere in the agreements executed by the Navajo Nation and the federal agency is it recognized that oversight of such programs would be by an elected Western Agency manager as this legislation proposes.
He said the resolution lacks information about the relationship the decentralization project would have with existing governmental operations of the three branches of government, and makes no attempt to address the fiscal impact it would have on the services provided in the other Navajo agencies.

He said that rather than assist chapters gain local governance certification, the legislation would undermine the purpose of the Local Governance Act and would shift critical resources from other agencies.

"Most certainly it would decrease funding to those agencies and, consequently, the services now provided in the other agencies in order to subsidize the significant costs of duplicating departments and services now being provided in the Western Agency," he said.

If this resolution and subsequent plan is implemented, it would divide the Navajo Nation, he said.

"It would cause damage to the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation government, create funding uncertainties, and result in serious conflicts with existing Executive and Judicial Branch service providers," the President said.

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