



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Office of the President falsely accuses Council Delegates of discrediting Judge Perry for extending TRO

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Office of the President issued a press release on May 11 alleging Council Delegates Kee Allen Begay and Young Jeff Tom of discrediting Judge Carol Perry for her decision to extend a temporary restraining order to raise doubt in the public's mind about their own Navajo court system, which is definitely not the case as they executed their roles as lawmakers by upholding Diné culture and sovereignty by being responsive and accountable to their Navajo constituents.

In his role as chairman and a member of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. Begay is simply exercising his responsibility in improving the Navajo judicial system, which is contrary to the assumptions the Office of the President (OPVP) claimed in a recent press release. Begay would know and recognize first hand the issues within the judicial branch and its court decisions.

According to 2 N.N.C. § 574 of the Navajo Nation Code, some of the powers of the Judiciary Committee include:

1. To serve as the oversight committee for all operations of the Judicial Branch
2. To review and evaluate the performance of probationary and permanent justices and judges
3. To initiate, recommend, support and sponsor legislation to improve the Navajo judicial system
4. To review and/or propose legislation and make recommendations regarding any proposed or current laws, procedures, and regulations affecting or creating any impact on the Judicial Branch
5. To review and approve plans of operation for all Judicial Branch divisions, departments and programs and to amend or rescind such plans of operation.

"As a delegate and chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I am following what is in the law. The Judiciary Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council has oversight authority of the Judicial Branch," Begay said. "My statement is not about asking the judge to make a decision. My comment was more about how the judges are relying on other court hearings and literally ignoring what is in the law. For the past seven years, there was no problem with the court system until recently."

Unfortunately, Begay does not have a personal or political agenda as the Office of the President's press release assumes. In fact, the OPVP press release is a political tactic in itself as Begay is merely acting according to his enumerated powers as chairman and member of the Judiciary Committee in accordance with the Navajo Nation Code.

"If the Office of the President has a concern with judicial matters, the committee can certainly enlighten the Office of the President of the committee's authority," Begay added. "We are inviting the Office of the President to come to the Judiciary Committee regular meeting on May 20. I am not asking the president to sit in for all of our meetings, but to provide feedback such as the processing of legislation and other judicial related matters."

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"If the Office of the President is so in tune with following my words through a microscope, my activity and my movement, why aren't they helping me out in addressing dilapidated court facilities on the Navajo Nation?" Begay added. "We have the Chief Justice evaluation coming up and District Judge evaluations coming up as well, this is our function according to the law. I am sure the Office of the President will be preparing a statement because I am voluntarily assigned to sit in on the evaluation of Judge Perry."

It is the intent of Begay and Tom to make aware of the courts flawed system, which the people need to know about.

"It has been over one year that the President has not acted on the recommendations of the committee to appoint another judge," Begay said. "If the Executive Branch is so concerned with the Judicial Branch, why don't they tackle those problems for the Navajo Nation, instead judges are being reassigned."

"We have, and I have, advocated on behalf of our Navajo people that we should have quality justice for our people based on our Navajo laws, but this is being violated," Begay added. "I believe our court system is being abused and our judges are being persuaded to be on one side – this is not justice for the Navajo people."

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