23rd Navajo Nation Council
Office of the Speaker

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Thomas J. Holgate sworn in as interim Chief Justice for the Navajo Nation

Photo: Acting Chief Justice Thomas Holgate was sworn in to serve on an interim basis to serve as the Chief Justice for the Navajo Nation on Aug. 1 in Window Rock at the Navajo Nation Council Chamber.

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, Thomas J. Holgate was sworn in as the acting Chief Justice for the Navajo Nation following the retirement of acting Chief Justice Allen Sloan on July 31. Chief Justice Holgate is a former Navajo Nation district court judge who served for nearly 16 years for the Nation.

On Monday, the Navajo Nation Council's Law and Order Committee considered Legislation No. 0274-17, which designated Holgate as the acting Chief Justice for the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. The LOC voted 3-0 to approve the legislation and serves as the final authority on the bill.

Chief Justice Holgate is originally from Shonto, Ariz. and resides in St. Michaels, Ariz. His maternal clan is Lók'aa' Dine'é (Reed People) and his paternal clan is Naaneesht'ézhí Táchjį'nii (Charcoal Streaked Division of the Red Running Into the Water Clan). He is married to Esther Holgate and has two sons.

At the swearing-in ceremony, 23rd Navajo Nation Council Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T'iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) welcomed Chief Justice Holgate and said he looks forward to working with him in regards to Navajo Nation issues and the upcoming budget sessions for the Nation.

"We welcome you to the Nation as our interim Chief Justice. We look forward to your participation in tackling the Nation's issues, especially when we convene for our Three Branch Chief's meetings. There is much work to be done and I am confident we can make significant progress during your term," said Speaker Bates.

Speaker Bates also thanked former acting Chief Justice Sloan for his service and said the Council commends the hard work he has completed for Nation during his term.

LOC chair and legislation sponsor for the appointment, Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), expressed gratitude for the interim appointment made by his committee and said they will continue to work with the Judicial Branch on issues to improve services for Navajo citizens.

"I want to thank acting Chief Justice Holgate for stepping up to the plate. Our committee is looking forward to working with him and we appreciate his acceptance to serve the Navajo Nation," said Delegate Yazzie.

Chief Justice Holgate thanked the LOC, Speaker Bates, and President Begaye for considering him for the position and said he is ready to take on the challenges facing the Judicial Branch.

"I am privileged that the Nation has called upon me to take this opportunity to work again. It's a calling like the Honorable Allen Sloan once said, to come forth and serve our people in the most mindful and prudent way," said Chief Justice Holgate.

Chief Justice Holgate will serve until the Navajo Nation Council has confirmed JoAnn Jayne, who was appointed by President Begaye on July 11. The Council will consider Jayne's appointment at the next regular Council session in October.

Also in attendance at the swearing-in ceremony included President Begaye, Council delegates Nelson BeGaye and Davis Filfred, and Arizona State Rep. Jamescita Peshlakai.

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