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Law and Order Committee recommends judge appointments and chief justice applicants to President, clarifies vote on veterans bill

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee approved three legislations, recommending the probationary appointments of Tina Tsinigine, Ronda Tuni, and Barbara Ann Willeto to serve as Navajo Nation District Court judges. A separate legislation recommends the names of three applicants to serve as the chief justice of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), who sponsored the legislations, stated that the committee has worked diligently to fill the vacant positions within the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch.

"The committee recognizes the need for judges within the Nation. Many of our district courts are operating with a limited number of staffing and judges. Therefore, the committee worked collaboratively with the Judicial Branch to interview qualified candidates and recommend appointments to the President," stated Delegate Yazzie.

Pursuant to Title II of the Navajo Nation Code, the LOC assesses the qualifications of all applicants for district court judges and chief justice and issues recommendations for appointments to the Navajo Nation president. The president appoints judges and the justice to serve a two-year probationary period. The president's permanent appointments are then subject to final confirmation by the Navajo Nation Council.

"As of today, the chief justice position is vacant and acting chief justice Allen Sloan has been taking the responsibilities and duties of the position. Three applicants have completed the interview process," stated LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi).

The three applicants for chief justice, listed in order of preference, are current deputy attorney general Rodgerick T. Begay, JoAnn B. Jayne, and current district court judge Carol K. Perry.

Delegate Yazzie added, "We believe that the qualified candidates will greatly contribute to the Judicial Branch. The committee will continue to support the Judicial Branch and address the need for judicial services."

The Law and Order Committee approved each of the four legislations with a 4-0. The committee serves as the final authority for the bills.

Following the meeting, LOC chair Delegate Yazzie reaffirmed the Law and Order Committee's support for Legislation No. 0191-17, which seeks to amend the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund interest income allocation that is used to provide direct services for Navajo veterans.

Delegate Yazzie said that several veteran organizations were mistakenly informed that the LOC voted down the legislation. However, Delegate Yazzie clarified that the committee considered the legislation and unanimously voted in support of the bill.

"We want our veterans to know that they have the full support of the Law and Order Committee and that we support the legislation to provide additional funds to help them," stated Delegate Yazzie.

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