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President Shelly Releases Statement for Navajo Sovereignty Day

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly released the following statement about Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day, which is recognized today, April 22.

“Today, our tribal government recognizes Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day. A day when we remember and recognize the decision of the United States Supreme Court in 1985 to uphold our ability to tax without the approval of the Secretary of Interior. With that unanimous decision, the highest court in the country recognized our sovereignty as the Navajo Nation.

We created Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day on May 3, 1985.

Today, my relatives, I want us to remember our sovereignty before the U.S. Supreme Court made their decision. We established our sovereignty by practicing our Diné teachings. We practiced our sovereignty by speaking our language to our grandchildren, ensuring that our culture was passed on to the future generation. We practiced our sovereignty by keeping our ceremonies in tact and never losing our faith in the Holy People. We practiced our sovereignty by instilling in our children the fundamental teachings of who we are as Diné.

The Holy People have always known who we are; therefore we have always been sovereign. As we move forward, we need to continue to practice cultural independence. Sovereignty is not defined completely by a court of law; it's defined in our free ability to guide our children into the lives we want for them.

We are a diverse Navajo Nation with many different methods of expressing our ideas and culture. As we live as independent people by the teachings bestowed upon us by the Holy People, we must remember that in the complex society we live in

today, our Diné teachings are the basis of who we are and within the practice of those teachings, we establish our sovereignty.

Regardless, we are thankful for the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to uphold our ability to tax. The court confirmed our true ability to govern our land. We are a sovereign Navajo Nation."

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