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PRESIDENT BEGAYE AND VICE PRESIDENT NEZ AFFIRM THE VOICE OF THE NAVAJO PEOPLE IN CONTINUING TO SUPPORT THE LINE-ITEM VETO

WINDOW ROCK-On Wednesday, Dec. 30, the Navajo Nation Council will hold a special session with the intent to override the Navajo Nation President's line-item veto authority granted through referendum by the Navajo people. The legislation is sponsored by Honorable Alton Joe Shepherd.

This legislation was previously vetoed by President Begaye on Nov. 12 as it attempts to amend the President's line-item veto authority.

On December 15, 2009, the Navajo People voted on an initiative that would empower the Navajo Nation President with line-item veto authority. The text of the initiative is as follows:

"The President of the Navajo Nation will be authorized to exercise line item veto authority over budget items contained in the annual Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget or supplemental appropriation approved by the Navajo Nation Council. Budget line items vetoed by the President of the Navajo Nation will not be subject to Navajo Nation Council override.....If approved, this initiative may be repealed or amended by the initiative process only."

In 2009, the intent of the line-item veto initiative was to protect the government from wasteful spending and ensure governmental fiscal efficiency and responsibility. Nowhere in the language approved by the Navajo people does the initiative state that the president's line-item veto authority is limited to numeric dollar amounts.

As such, the line-item veto authority encompasses all aspects of the budget and not just the immediate appropriations, but also those budget items with a future impact, such as conditions of appropriations (COA).

President Begaye has stated that COAs can be manipulated to earmark or direct the Executive Branch to appropriate funds without placing numerical figures to them.

"In one instance, percentages were used in an ambiguous way to appropriate dollars to a COA. Without the line-item veto, this spending percentage for a certain project would have remained. For us to exhibit fiduciary responsibility based on the voice of the people, the President's line-item veto authority helps us to exercise more financially sound and responsible spending."

In a press release issued by the Office of the Speaker, the Naabik'iyati Committee stated the proposed legislation seeks to clarify the president's line-item veto authority, streamline the legislative process by amending the President's line-item veto authority "only to the numeric appropriated dollar amount".

President Begaye said this is completely contrary to the plain language of the initiative passed by the Navajo people. The initiative clearly states "budget items" in the "Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget and supplemental appropriations" are subject to "line item vetoes". It does not say "numeric dollar amounts".

"Only the People can limit and clarify this authority," said President Begaye. "This is not a question for the

Navajo Nation Council. This is a question that only the Navajo people can answer.”

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lorenzo Bates has called upon OPVP to find a reasonable solution.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez have previously proposed a compromise by agreeing to sign into law Title Two amendment’s legislation as originally recommended and submitted by the Title Two Subcommittee. Vice President Nez said that Council’s reluctance to consider the compromise is evident in moving the legislation forward to Wednesday’s meeting.

The Begaye-Nez administration continues to support the voice of the Navajo people and would like to thank the Council delegates who also voted in support of the voice of the Navajo people as it pertains to the line-item veto authority.

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