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## UNIQUE MOMENT IN PRESIDENTIAL WREATH LAYING SERVICE AT VETERANS MEMORIAL WALL

WINDOW ROCK, ARIZ-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez laid a wreath on the Veterans Memorial Wall on Memorial Day in honor of all fallen veterans.

“Our freedom is not free,” President Begaye said. “We honor all veterans today and those that fell. We want to thank our soldiers and let them know that they will never be forgotten.”

The president and vice president were joined in the service by Gold Star Mother Isabelle Shondee.

President Begaye acknowledged all families who have lost loved ones in their service to protect our freedom. Gold Star Mother Isabelle Shondee participated in honor of her fallen son, Army Specialist Harry Shondiin.

Veterans in attendance commented that they have seen wreath laying services during national ceremonies but that it was rare for one to take place on the Navajo Nation.

The president said the Navajo Nation will move forward in constructing a veterans museum that will tell the story of our sol-

diers that have served in foreign wars.

Honoring our fallen veterans shouldn't only happen on Memorial Day, said Vice President Nez, but that it should be a part of every day.

On Saturday, May 28, the vice president and a group of runners took to the trails of the Chuska Mountains to participate in a remembrance run for our fallen Navajo veterans.

“While we ran many miles, we thought about the family members who have been left behind. We realize that they have gone through so much without having their son or daughter, or father or mother around. We wanted to honor them,” he said.

President Begaye agreed stating, “Today, on Memorial Day, we say thank you to mom and dad for raising your children to sacrifice in defending the freedom of this great nation. They have paid the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives for us.”

Along with Blue Star Mother Isabelle Shondee, the president and vice president were joined by current Miss Navajo Alyson Shirley, Cal Curley, Field Representative for N.M. Senator



President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez ceremonially laid a wreath on the Veterans Memorial Wall at Window Rock Veterans Memorial Park.



Left to right: Gold Star Mother Isabelle Shondee, President Begaye, Vice President Nez and Phefelia Nez stand in reverence during the wreath laying service on Memorial Day.

Tom Udall, OPVP Chief of Staff Arbin Mitchell and Navajo Nation Council Delegate Raymond Smith.

Vice President Nez said that on Memorial Day we should continue to lift those families who

are still here with us in prayer.

“Let us always remember that it was for us and our freedom that many veterans have served and died,” President Begaye said. “They will never be forgotten.”