



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Nez-Lizer request the Navajo people to urge Council members to honor the votes of the Navajo people by voting down Legislation No. 0153-20**

*“Budget and Finance Committee and Law and Order Committee vote against the will of the Navajo People”*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer are calling on members of the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council to protect the voices and votes of the Navajo people by voting down Legislation No. 0153-20, which seeks to obstruct and modify the line-item veto authority that was authorized by Navajo voters in 2009 to reduce wasteful overspending by the Navajo Nation Council. The 2009 initiative language clearly states that the initiative may be repealed or amended by the initiative process only.

“The line item veto initiative developed due to the mismanagement of the Navajo people’s money by the Council, including millions of dollars that were allocated for discretionary funds that eventually led to the removal and resignation of several former Council members. Since the Navajo people approved the initiative in 2009, the line item veto authority has saved and protected tens of millions of dollars of the Navajo people’s money. Legislation No. 0153-20 would unlawfully limit and change what the Navajo people approved in 2009, only the people have the power to change the authority,” said President Nez.

Legislation No. 0153-20, sponsored by Council Delegate Daniel Tso and co-sponsored by Speaker Seth Damon, is seeking to codify the language of the 2009 initiative by including it in Title II of the Navajo Nation Code, which would make it subject to amendments and changes by the Navajo Nation Council. This would eliminate and do away with the Navajo people’s right to repeal or amend the line item veto initiative.

The Navajo Nation Council has a long history of challenging the vote of the Navajo people, including attempting to override line item veto actions, which is clearly prohibited by the 2009 initiative. In a 2010 legal opinion, former Navajo Nation Attorney General Louis Denetsosie stated, “Navajo voters, by approving the initiative, enacted law that authorizes the Navajo Nation President to exercise budget line item veto authority. This law also prohibits the Navajo Nation Council from overriding the President’s budget line item vetoes.”

In June 2020, Council Delegate Daniel Tso and Speaker Seth Damon sponsored legislation to once again challenge the votes of the Navajo people, by introducing legislation that sought to override

the line item vetoes executed by President Nez. Thanks to the opposing votes of Council Delegates Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Paul Begay, Pernell Halona, Jamie Henio, Rickie Nez, and Edmund Yazzie, the attempted override failed by a vote of 14-6.

“It’s clear that certain members of the Council are trying to push aside the will of the Navajo people in a shameful attempt to assert more power and authority for the Navajo Nation Council. We are very thankful to the six members of the Council who voted against the previous attempt to override line item vetoes, and we look to them once again to do the right thing by voting down Legislation No. 0153-20. We also ask the Navajo people to write to the members of the Council and urge them to vote down the bill,” President Nez stated.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council and its Standing Committees have held countless meetings and work sessions nearly every day, for which they are financially compensated for with the Navajo people’s money. These meetings and work sessions are held through conference calls, which are often subject to technical interference and miscalculated and disputed voting results. The Council has yet to provide guidance and clear rules to conduct meetings and work sessions by teleconference and this has led to plenty of chaos and confusion. Subsequently, we are seeing legislations being rushed through the legislative process, many times without any debate or supporting documents, seeking to appropriate and overspend the Navajo people’s money. We are simply trying to protect the Navajo people’s money and trying to prevent a repeat of the discretionary fund scandal. The bottom line is that the line item veto authority is the only tool that the Navajo people have to protect the funds of the Navajo Nation,” added President Nez.

With very little debate and due diligence, the Budget and Finance Committee voted 5-0 in support of the legislation on Tuesday, and the Law and Order Committee voted 3-0 in support of the bill on Wednesday. The bill now moves forward to the Naabik’iyati’ Committee, which will likely consider the bill on July 16, and the Navajo Nation Council. Legislation No. 0153-20 requires two-thirds approval, or 16 supporting votes, by the full Council to pass.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer request the Navajo people to sign an online petition to protect the voices of the Navajo people by opposing Legislation No. 0153-20. Link to online petition: <http://chng.it/2tdfYhrDW2>.

In addition, the Nez-Lizer Administration requests members of the Navajo Nation to submit opposing comments for Legislation No. 0153-20 by e-mail to the following three email addresses:

[comments@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:comments@navajo-nsn.gov)

[24thNNC@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:24thNNC@navajo-nsn.gov)

[navajonationpubliccomments@gmail.com](mailto:navajonationpubliccomments@gmail.com)

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