



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Nez-Lizer oppose the State of New Mexico's motion to dismiss the Yazzie and Martinez v. State of New Mexico lawsuit

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued a letter to New Mexico State Legislature House Speaker Brian Egolf, Majority Floor Leader Sheryl Stapleton, New Mexico State Reps. Derrick Lente, Wonda Johnson, Anthony Allison, and Georgene Louis, to oppose the motion to dismiss the Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico lawsuit because the state has not complied with the spirit of the court's Order.

The lawsuit highlighted the faltering education system in New Mexico, particularly its failure to provide at-risk students, including Native American students, the education they are constitutionally entitled to.

"Native American students, including Navajo students, constitute a significant percentage of the student population attending New Mexico's public schools. The lawsuit needs to be pursued so Native students can be provided adequate education programs and services necessary to learn and thrive. Our students deserve an educational environment that prioritizes their culture and unique needs. It is time for our Native students to have the same opportunities as other students," said President Nez.

In July 2018, Judge Sarah Singleton ruled that all New Mexico students have a right to be college and career ready and that the state failed to meet that obligation. The state was unable to comply with the state and federal laws regarding the education of Native American and English Language Learner (ELL) students.

The state failed to provide Native American and ELL students programs and services to prepare for college or a career, such as extended learning, dual language, culturally and linguistically relevant education, social services, and others.

"As leaders and parents, we want and need our children to get the best education. Lack of funding should not be considered when denying our children's educational goals and dreams. The state's Public Education Department continues to fail our students," said Vice President Lizer.

Two years after Judge Singleton's decision, the state of New Mexico has not yet implemented the systemic change required in the Order. State schools serving Navajo students have not provided

quality or useful technical assistance, guidance, or training needed to assist in the implementation of special education programs. The reports are of great concern to the Navajo Nation.

“The court decision states that the state failed to abide by the New Mexico Indian Education Act, and this is an issue we cannot ignore. Our Native American students are the foundation of our families, culture, and future, and they have every right to excel. Therefore, we strongly oppose the motion of dismissal,” added President Nez.

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