FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 16, 2021

President Nez orders flags to be flown at half-staff in honor of late former Navajo Nation President Kelsey Begaye

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued a proclamation calling for all flags on the Navajo Nation to be flown at half-staff beginning on Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2021 through Friday, Aug. 20, 2021, in honor and memory of former Navajo Nation President Kelsey Begaye, who passed away on Friday, Aug. 13 at the age of 70.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with Honorable Begaye’s wife, children, and grandchildren at this difficult time. He was a person of great faith and that’s what he relied on throughout his life, especially during challenging times. As we grieve together, we also turn to our prayers to provide strength and comfort for his loved ones and all who knew him. With the proclamation issued today, we pay tribute to Honorable Kelsey Begaye and thank him and his family for all of their sacrifices for the Navajo people,” said President Nez.

Begaye was born on Jan. 7, 1951 in Kaibeto, Ariz. He was Tódích’ií’nii and born for Tł’ízí Iání. Prior to his public service, Begaye served in the Vietnam War as a member of the United States Army. He later became a substance abuse counselor, helping many young people to overcome drug and alcohol abuse. Prior to being elected President, he also served as a local school board member, President and Secretary/Treasurer for Kaibeto Chapter, and two-terms as the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council. He served as the President of the Navajo Nation from 1999-2003 with former Vice President Taylor McKenzie, M.D.

“Honorable Kelsey Begaye touched so many lives through his work as a substance abuse counselor, Vietnam veteran, and a public servant. He was a very humble person who overcame adversities as a young man, turned to his faith in God, and dedicated so many years of his life to helping and serving others. He will be remembered as a loving, caring, and gracious person who devoted his life to his family, his faith, and his people,” said Vice President Lizer.

Kelsey Begaye is survived by his wife, Marie Begaye, and five children. Their eldest son passed away in 2014. Due to COVID-19 risks, the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President is also working with the family to offer live-streaming of the funeral service on Friday, Aug. 20, 2021. More information will be provided when available.

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THE NAVAJO NATION

Proclamation

IN HONOR AND REMEMBRANCE OF
FORMER NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT KELSEY BEGAYE

THE NAVAJO NATION is greatly saddened by the loss of our Diné Leader Kelsey Begaye, former President of the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS, Kelsey Begaye served the Navajo people as the President of the Navajo Nation from 1999 to 2003; Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council from 1995 to 1999; he also served as the Secretary/Treasurer and President of Kaibeto Chapter; and

WHEREAS, he served our country as a member of the United States Army in the Vietnam War as a Radio Operator and was honorably discharged; and

WHEREAS, he overcame adversities in his personal life, turned to his faith in God, and dedicated over 30 years of his life to counseling and helping many individuals suffering from substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation commemorates the late Kelsey Begaye, for his honorable service, leadership, and compassion for the Diné People; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation offers its prayers and condolences to his family, friends, and community.

NOW THEREFORE, I, JONATHAN NEZ, President of the Navajo Nation and I, MYRON LIZER, Vice President of the Navajo Nation do hereby order that all flags on the Navajo Nation shall be flown at half-staff to honor the memory and service of the late Kelsey Begaye from August 17, 2021 through August 20, 2021.

PROCLAIMED THIS 16th DAY OF AUGUST 2021

Jonathan Nez, President
THE NAVAJO NATION

Myron Lizer, Vice President
THE NAVAJO NATION