



The Navajo Nation  
Office of the President and Vice President

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**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 Tódich’ii’nii and born for T’íizí lání. 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 16<sup>th</sup> DAY OF AUGUST 2021**

Handwritten signature of Jonathan Nez in black ink.

Jonathan Nez, *President*  
**THE NAVAJO NATION**

Handwritten signature of Myron Lizer in black ink.

Myron Lizer, *Vice President*  
**THE NAVAJO NATION**