



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758

nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2021

President Nez and Vice President Lizer offer condolences to the family of former Navajo Nation Supreme Court Associate Justice Lorene B. Ferguson

.WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer are saddened to learn of the passing of retired Navajo Nation Supreme Court Associate Justice Lorene B. Ferguson, who passed away on Monday due to complications from COVID-19.

“The Navajo Nation mourns the loss of a loving mother and one of the first women justices to serve on the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. Our thoughts and prayers are with her children, relatives, and all of her friends and former colleagues. As we recognize National Women’s History Month, we take this opportunity to honor and remember all of Justice Ferguson’s contributions to the Navajo people. There is no doubt that she helped and empowered many throughout her lifetime. We ask our Creator for strength and comfort for her family during this difficult time,” said President Nez.



According to the Judicial Branch, Justice Ferguson was nominated to serve as Associate Justice by former President Kelsey Begaye in 2001 and later confirmed by the Navajo Nation Council. She served as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court from 2001-2007 and was appointed to serve as Acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from 2004-2005.

Prior to her appointment as Supreme Court Justice, she served as the Navajo Nation Circuit Court Judge starting in 2000, working out of the Kayenta District Court, and as a Navajo Tribal Court Judge, from 1992 to 2000, assigned at different times to the Shiprock, Tohajiilee, Ramah and Alamo Courts. She came to the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch after having served as a Staff Attorney at the Navajo Nation Department of Justice for eight years. While at the Department of

Justice, she drafted the first Navajo Election Code and Navajo scholarship policy for the Department of Education, according to a statement by her family.

“The Judicial Branch sends condolences to a pivotal member of the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation. We pay our utmost respect for our nat’áanii as someone who exemplified the best of our Navajo people. She was a role model for her serious thinking on complex issues and the responsibility she took in being a Supreme Court justice. She was also well-known across Indian Country for her work in the legal field,” said Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne in a statement from the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch.

Justice Ferguson graduated from Fort Lewis College in 1965, majoring in English Literature with a minor in Psychology. She worked in the areas of community development, welfare rights and as a Head Start teacher and Indian Education training technician, before attending the University of New Mexico School of Law, where she graduated in 1983.

Justice Ferguson served as a mentor to countless law clerks and Navajo attorneys throughout her career. She was a strong advocate for education and traditional law. To her family, her most important and meaningful accomplishments were as wife, mother, grandmother, and matriarch for her family. Her family said that Justice Ferguson would want to encourage every Navajo citizen to stay safe and get vaccinated.

“Our Nation lost a humble, strong, and loving person, but her work for others and the joy that she brought to her family will always be cherished. My heart goes out to her family, friends, and all of our colleagues within the Judicial Branch. Her contributions will be memorialized in her accomplishments and all that she did to move our Nation forward,” said Vice President Lizer.

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.