



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council members take the oath of office



PHOTO: Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council members take the oath of office administered by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez in Tse Bonito, N.M. on Jan. 4, 2022.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez had the honor of administering the oath of office to several new members of the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council, during the group’s quarterly meeting held on Tuesday.

The six new members include Tim Johnson, Linda Onesalt, Elouise Brown, Gabriella Mehl, Gilbert Platero, and Olin Kieyoomia who previously served on the Advisory Council. They join returning members Elciena Baker, Billy Goodman, Jr., Vern Roy Lee, and Marie A. Zwierlein. President Nez also provided the opening prayer and following the oath of office, the Veterans Advisory Council

elected Tim Johnson, Central Agency, to serve as the new chair, Elouise Brown, Northern Agency, to serve as the vice chair, and Elciena Baker, Chinle Agency, as the Secretary.

“On behalf of the Navajo Nation, we congratulate all of the new and returning members of the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council and we thank them for taking on the challenge of serving our Navajo veterans and working together with all leaders. We honor and appreciate all of our Navajo warriors for their service and sacrifices and we look forward to having respectful and productive conversations to create solutions and provide more efficient services for all veterans,” said President Nez.

In October, President Nez was joined by Navajo Nation Veterans Administration Executive Director James Zwierlein for a meeting with U.S. Deputy Assistant Sec. for the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Stephanie Birdwell under the U.S. Department of Veterans, to request support for establishing a new federal Veterans Administration regional district that would be located on the Navajo Nation to provide service benefits closer to home and reduce the travel costs that many Navajo veterans incur commuting hundreds of miles to the nearest federal veterans offices in cities like Albuquerque, N.M. and Phoenix, Ariz.

With a population of over 10,000 Navajo veterans, President Nez is proposing a Native American veterans center on the Navajo Nation to provide federal benefits including clinical and mental health services to help Native American veterans with PTSD and other health care issues. In addition, he and Director Zwierlein continue to urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to reinstate assistance for traditional healing that was previously offered through the Carl T. Hayden Traditional Healing Program. Director Zwierlein was recently selected by the U.S. Veterans Department to serve on the VA Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs.

The Navajo Veterans Administration also broke ground on the first new homes for a Navajo veteran under the Navajo Veterans Housing Program, which will soon be completed. The program is also in the process of repairing homes that were constructed between 2014 and 2017 in each of the five agencies on the Navajo Nation. Construction of more homes will begin soon.

“Congratulations to all of the members of the Veterans Advisory Council and to the new chair, vice chair, and secretary. Our administration remains committed to working together with our veterans. We are excited to see more homes being built this year for veterans and expanding those opportunities to more of our people,” said Vice President Lizer.

“We are all five-fingered beings and we will continue to work together to resolve issues for veterans. We thank our Navajo veterans for meeting with us today and we will continue to meet on a regular basis,” added President Nez.

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