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President Shelly exercises Line-Item Veto On Fiscal-Year 2012 Navajo Nation Government Budget

Window Rock, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed into law yesterday the fiscal year 2012 Navajo Government budget while exercising presidential line-item veto authority to save \$2,376,000 in government spending.

This action was the first time a Navajo Nation President exercised line-item veto authority on a fiscal year budget.

“We must be fiscally responsible with the Navajo people’s money,” said President Shelly. “We will continue to do more with less and be persistent in our efforts to create a more prosperous Navajo Nation.”

Funding in the amount of \$353,254 for the Office of the Navajo Green Commission was among the 16 items President Shelly chose to line-item veto.

In his message to Navajo Nation Speaker Johnny Naize, the president stated the original intent of the commission was to seek outside grants for its operations.

“Resolution CJY-22-09 enacted the Navajo Nation Green Economy Fund Act,” wrote President Shelly. “Since the creation of the Green Commission, a budget was not established as the intent of the Green Commission” was to seek outside dollars.

Funding in the amount of \$838,656 to hire assistants for every delegate was also identified as a line-item veto.

“These budget line items were not justifiable because the Navajo People expected an expenditure reduction within the Legislative Branch, which was proven by an election to reduce council delegates to 24 members,” said President Shelly.

Among other items, a total of \$347,233 in proposed funding for travel and operating supplies at the Office of the Speaker were line-item vetoed.

An additional line-item veto included \$111,466 in funding for the Little Folks Day Care.

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Through his budget impact analysis to President Shelly, Office of Management and Budget Director Dominic Beyal stated in previous years, Little Folks Day Care received a grant for \$75,000. However, "No justification is provided for the increase to \$111,466."

Through his review, President Shelly chose to leave all funding intact for government development efforts.

"Out of adherence to the Navajo Nation Supreme Court Opinion, I purposely did not veto any of the appropriation to the Office of the Government Development and Government Development Commission," stated President Ben Shelly. "I commend this Council for working to bring the Nation out of its deficit. We need to continue to work together to ensure the fiscal trust of the Navajo People."

In December 2009, the Navajo People voted to give the Navajo Nation President line-item veto authority to ensure a stronger check and balances mechanism over Navajo Nation financial matters.

"Our Navajo Nation departments and programs have \$60 Million in unmet needs," said President Shelly. "Meeting this entire financial need will continue to be a challenge for Navajo leadership. With the limited funds we do receive, we must be careful and exercise fiscal responsibility."

According to Navajo Nation law, line-item veto actions on budget items are not subject to a veto-override by the Navajo Nation Council.

Legislation CAU-37-11, "An Act Relating to Budget and Finance and the Naabik'iyati' Committees: Adopting the Navajo Nation Fiscal Year 2012 Comprehensive Budget," was submitted to the Navajo Nation Council, through the Office of the Speaker, within the 10-day submission requirement.

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