



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., thanks Council delegates for defeating legislation to dismiss Navajo Attorney General

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., today expressed his appreciation to Navajo Nation Council delegates who voted to defeat legislation that called for the dismissal of Navajo Nation Attorney General Louis Denetsosie.

The Council voted 60 to 20, with eight either abstaining or not voting, to defeat legislation sponsored by Delegate Young Jeff Tom that would have removed Mr. Denetsosie, who has served as attorney general since 2003. Lawrence Platero withdrew as a co-sponsor and voted against the proposed legislation.

“On behalf of the Navajo people, I want to express my sincere appreciation to those delegates who voted against this legislation and expressed support for our Attorney General,” the President said. “Thank you for seeing through the emotion of the moment and focusing on the long-term interests of our people and our Nation.”

From the Council floor, some delegates noted that the legislation provided no substantive information to support the attorney general’s removal. Attachments to the legislation, and comments to the press by the Speaker’s office, showed that the removal attempt was based simply on disagreement with conclusions of an April 29 legal opinion by Mr. Denetsosie.

Mr. Denetsosie said today that because the Department of Justice represents multiple clients, it sometimes gets caught up in political controversies.

“It’s unfortunate that DOJ gets caught in the middle of these controversies because both the President and the Council are our clients,” he said. “But we’re prepared to work with both consistent with our plan of operation, and I, too, would like to thank the Council delegates who expressed support for me.”

A new story in the Navajo Times this week falsely implied that Mr. Denetsosie had signed a government reform petition that seeks to place the reduction of the Navajo Nation Council from 88 to 24 delegates on the November election ballot.

“Many delegates recognize the good Mr. Denetsosie has done to promote the Navajo Nation and protect its sovereignty, and the important leadership he provides at the Department of Justice.”

– Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.

Delegate Leonard Tsosie said he asked Mr. Denetsosie whether he had signed the petition, and that he looked him in the eye and replied, “absolutely not.”

He said dismissing Mr. Denetsosie would negatively impact morale at the Navajo Department of Justice.

“What we do will define us, how we work with Navajo attorneys in the future,” Mr. Tsosie told his Council colleagues. “There is no wrongdoing here. Where in the legislation is wrongdoing alleged?”

In a memo to each of the delegates last week, President Shirley said that as the Navajo Nation’s chief legal officer, Mr. Denetsosie has a duty to review and evaluate all legal possibilities when a legal opinion is sought. He said Mr. Denetsosie “fulfilled his obligation and performed his duty in a proper, impartial and professionally indifferent way.”

“From the time I heard about the petition, I informed the President that I could not be in support of the initiatives nor could any of the attorneys in the Department of Justice,” Mr. Denetsosie said. “That’s because we have multiple clients. That’s one thing I wish to be understood.”

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