



February 21, 2015

Statement from Speaker LoRenzo Bates regarding Supreme Court decision

The decision issued by the Navajo Nation Supreme Court to render Council resolutions CD-80-14 and CD-81-14 null and void is very troublesome in that it greatly undermines the legislative authority of the Navajo Nation Council.

For the Supreme Court to say that the Navajo people are the governing power is accurate; however, the people have elected the members of Council who serve at the will of the people to be a voice of the people.

Each member of Council has the absolute right to introduce legislation; especially when a large number of our people felt they had been disenfranchised. By introducing legislation to address the election issues, Council members were simply acting at the overwhelming will of the Navajo people.

Yes, there are many on both sides of the issue. However, the 22nd Navajo Nation Council sought a way of rectifying the problem that evolved from ambiguities within our laws. As the policy-makers of our Nation, I implore our legislative body to continue to address the “gray areas” of our laws and to continue to be a voice for the people. It will be the decision of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council to address these issues.

I must share my disdain for some of the language found in the Supreme Court’s decision. For the Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation to characterize the efforts of the Council as “feeble” and “self-interested” is slanderous and without merit. I recommend to the Chief Justice to maintain a higher level of respect and dignity when addressing matters of great significance to our people.

It is the Council's intent to bring a resolution to this issue and for the Court to invalidate the action of the Legislature is beyond the authority of the Judicial Branch. The offer of "talking this out" is not acceptable by the Court and so we have no choice but to review the decision of the court. Together, the 23rd Navajo Nation Council will consult with one another and determine the path that is best for the Navajo People.

LoRenzo Bates, Speaker
23rd Navajo Nation Council