



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **Resolution requiring candidates to satisfy ethics violations prior to running for office becomes law**



**PHOTO: Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd and Vice President Jonathan Nez look on as President Russell Begaye signs a resolution into law that will prevent individuals with outstanding ethics violations from running for public office.**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) expressed his appreciation on Friday, as Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye signed into law a resolution that amends provisions in the Ethics in Navajo Government Law and the Navajo Nation Election Code to ensure that candidates running for office do not have any outstanding ethics violations before serving in an elected office.

The measure, sponsored by Delegate Shepherd, was unanimously approved by the Navajo Nation Council during a special session held on May 19.

“I want to thank the 23rd Navajo Nation Council and the Begaye/Nez administration for coming together to bring integrity back into the Navajo Nation,” stated Delegate Shepherd.

Candidates who run for public elective offices cannot have any outstanding ethics judgments, including orders for restitution to the Navajo Nation pursuant to the Navajo Ethics in Government Law, in accordance with the new law.

If elected officials are in violation of the Ethics in Government Law, the penalties will include disqualification from an election, while current tribal officials would face the possibility of removal. Other penalties may include administrative fines, civil damages, orders of restitution, criminal punishment, and ineligibility to run for a public office for a period of five years.

Following the signing of the resolution, President Russell Begaye thanked Delegate Shepherd and the Council for approving the measure and added that it will help to improve the perception of the Navajo Government.

“This is something that is much needed for the Navajo Nation as whole,” said President Begaye. “Our constituents want their government officials to be accountable.”

Delegate Shepherd added that if candidates or elected officials owe restitution to the Navajo Nation, it must be paid in full before they are eligible to run for a public office.

“These are the Navajo People's money, down to the penny and all leaders of this Nation need to be mindful of that each and every day,” added Delegate Shepherd. “This law will have a positive impact in many ways, starting with an individual's attitude which costs nothing.”

Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez was also on hand for the signing, and said he supported the legislation as a delegate as it made its way through the legislative process.

“Initiatives such as the one brought forth by Delegate Shepherd are a step toward restoring the people’s trust, but we also understand that there remains more to do,” stated Vice President Nez.

The new law becomes effective immediately and will be applied to future elections.

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