



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

HONORABLE LORENZO C. BATES
SPEAKER, 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

February 15, 2017

STATEMENT FROM SPEAKER LORENZO BATES REGARDING NOTICE OF INTENT

The Office of the Speaker is aware of the Notice of Intent to Sue filed by Tom Tso, former Chief Justice. The Office of the President and Vice President distributed the Notice to the media “per President Begaye’s request” according to an email message sent to several news reporters. The information did not include an explanation of the process and while the Legislative Branch is not a party to the potential lawsuit it is necessary to ensure the facts are correct regarding the process of Tom Tso’s letter.

A Notice of Intent to Sue is part of the Sovereign Immunity Act that requires notice to the Navajo Nation President, Attorney General, and the Chief Legislative Counsel. The notice is then followed by a complaint after 30 days and after receiving the complaint the Navajo Nation has 60 days to respond. Tom Tso names the Navajo Nation, the Office of the Controller and Bobby White, the former Acting Controller in his Notice of Intent to Sue.

While Tom Tso makes a number of allegations directed at the Navajo Nation Council he does not include the Navajo Nation Council as a potential defendant. The notice takes the allegations to the extreme by stating that a Delegate may potentially set eight meetings in a day to get paid, but anyone familiar with the work of Delegates knows that is a completely ignorant statement. In fact, Delegates are invited and/or required to attend numerous meetings on a daily basis to address the needs of their constituents, but Tso does not understand the demands of elected officials and has never walked in our shoes.

Tso’s allegations of “payments in excess of salaries” is a broad allegation that targets current and past Delegates, including those that currently hold the President and Vice-President positions. However, as mentioned, Tso’s notice does not include the Legislative Branch, but is targeted at the Executive Branch, which includes the Office of the President and Vice President.

LoRenzo Bates, Speaker
23rd Navajo Nation Council