



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEHSC confirms four appointments to Navajo Nation Board of Education

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Nov. 25, 2019 – The Health, Education and Human Services Committee confirmed four appointments to the Navajo Nation Board of Education (NNBE) during the Nov. 25 special meeting.

The NNBE consists of 11 members, five of which are elected at-large from each of the Navajo agencies and six are appointed positions.

President Jonathan Nez appointed five members to serve in six-year terms to the board. Four of these appointments were confirmed by the HEHSC. These included Dr. Henry Fowler, Joan Gray, Spencer Willie, and Andrea K. Thomas. The fifth appointment, Emerson John, was not present and the committee forwarded his confirmation to the next regular meeting.

HEHSC Chairman Daniel Tso (Bac-Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) said the positions have been vacant for the past 10 years. “This action comes as a result of our request to the Navajo Nation Board of Education. These have been long standing vacancies,” he said.

Dr. Fowler said he was raised in a traditional Navajo family, herding sheep, farming and tending to livestock in his home area of Cow Springs. A teacher for more than 20 years, he said that the Navajo language was very important and that he’s currently an apprentice to medicine man Johnson Dennison. “I believe and western and Navajo education. I came from here and I live here,” he said.

Joan Gray said that she has three children and has been an involved parent with the Kayenta Unified School District for more than 20 years. She is currently serving as a teacher at Kay-



PHOTO: Andrea Thomas of Shiprock has more than five years of experience as an elementary school teacher for her community. She said advocating for teachers on Navajo land is her priority. She was confirmed by HEHSC to serve on the Navajo Nation Board of Education Nov. 25.

enta Boarding School for seventh and eighth grade social studies. Gray noted that she is five classes away from obtaining her master’s degree in education at Northern Arizona University. “As a parent first, I hope that I make some kind of an impact for our kids,” she said.

Spencer Willie said that he is a parent of four children and that his role as parent representative to the NNBE would be a continuation of his more than 15 years of public service. Willie said he is a lifelong resident of Ft. Defiance and Window Rock. During his career, he served at Rough Rock Community School, Utah State University and Navajo Head Start. “All of my children are important to me. I value their education,” he said.

Andrea Thomas said she was raised in Shiprock and moved to a Phoenix suburb in middle school. She said that unique experience gave her insight into educational decisions many students and parents are making today across Navajo land with regard to the type of high-quality education that

their children receive. She has been teaching at Central Consolidated Schools for the past seven years and is a member of the New Mexico Teacher Evaluation Task Force, Yale National Fellows, New Mexico KidsCAN Advisory Board, and New Mexico Teacher Leader Network. “Within that time, I’ve really become a teacher advocate for listening to the voices of our teachers on the Navajo Reservation,” she said.

The committee received three reports on a Navajo youth biking initiative from Silver Stallion Bicycles of Gallup, discussion on permitting donation of annual or sick leave hours to tribal employees in need by the Department of Personnel Management, and a report on the Navajo Area Diabetes Program.

Legislation No. 0333-19 confirmed Delegate Carl Slater (Lukachukai, Round Rock, Tsaille-Wheatfields, Tse Ch’izhi, Rock Point) as HEHSC Vice Chairman last week during the regular meeting at Nenahnezad Chapter Nov. 20.

###

www.navajonationcouncil.org

MEDIA CONTACTS: Rick Abasta, Communications Director, (928) 530-8197
Byron C. Shorty, Sr. Public Information Officer, (928) 287-2085, nnlb.communications@gmail.com