



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Speaker Damon, 24th Navajo Nation Council mourn passing
of former Council Delegates John Perry Jr. and James Tomchee**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Jan. 13, 2020 – Speaker Seth Damon expressed his grief, on behalf of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, on the passing of former Council Delegates John Perry, Jr. and James Tomchee.

“Our great Navajo Nation mourns with the family and relatives of our community and tribal leaders. The passing of Hon. John Perry, Sr. and Hon. James Tomchee is a moment for the Nation to reflect on the journey we have made as a people, and those whose steady guidance we have relied upon to bring us to where we are,” said Speaker Damon.

Hon. John Perry, Jr.

John Perry, Jr. passed away on January 8, 2020 at the age of 71. He was a resident of Crownpoint, N.M. John Perry Jr. was a member of the Navajo Nation Council, having served on the 15th Council from 1982-1988, the 16th Council from 1988-1992, the 18th council from 1996-1998, and the 19th council from 1998-2000.

“Those who served alongside Honorable John Perry, Jr. will remember him fondly by his nickname: the Refridgerator. Mr. Perry could run a resolution through the goal line in the face of great ideological opposition like very few delegates on the Council could. His devotion to his communities and to the Diné people is to be admired greatly,” said Health, Education, and Human Services Chair Hon. Daniel Tso.

John Perry, Jr. was also known as a former rodeo announcer and founding member of the Navajo Nation Rodeo Cowboy Association. Mr. Perry was also a traditional Navajo practitioner that conducted many ceremonies throughout Navajo land, assisting many Diné people. His father, the late John Perry, Sr., and his son, Jonathan Perry, also served on the Navajo Nation Council.

During his term as Council Delegate, he was a member of the Budget and Finance Committee, the Resources Committee, the Advisory Committee, and the Intergovernmental Relations Committee. During his 12 years on the Navajo Nation Council, he represented the communities of Becenti, Crownpoint, Nahodishgish, and Tse’ii’ahi. He was also a former Chapter President for Crownpoint.

Hon. James Tomchee

James Tomchee (Jan. 7, 2020) was a member of the 17th Navajo Nation Council from 1992-1997. James Tomchee represented the community of Teec Nos Pos, AZ, in addition to his prior years of service to the Diné people in the US Bureau of Indian Affairs and Navajo schools as a guidance counselor, teacher, principle, branch chief, and superintendant.

Council Delegate Charlainé Tso said: “I am very thankful to Honorable Tomchee for the contribution to our educational growth over the past few decades. He was an avid advocate for Diné teachers. Loved and respected by many, and most definitely a role model. The attitude he reserved was perseverance and diligence. We will continue to build from his foundation and to build our own legacy.”

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James Tomchee was 86, and remains the only member of the Navajo Nation Council to win as a write-in candidate. His term included serving on the former Ethics and Rules Committee. In 1992, James Tomchee became the first Navajo to be elected School Superintendent of Apache County.

“What resonates the most about our dad is how he engrained in us the value of obtaining a good, quality education,” the Tomchee family shared.

“College was never an option. It was a given. He had learned over the years that knowledge is power, and that all things are possible through our faith through the Holy Spirit. James consistently encouraged us to master the English language, apply ourselves in school, study hard, be self-discipline, and to always remember: to know where you are going is to know where you came from,” they said.

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