



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Let's Journey Together: Navajo Nation Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye Resigns

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch'izhí), who has served on the Navajo Nation Council for four terms, has resigned from the Council for health reasons.

He announced his retirement on July 15, 2019 on the first day of the Summer Council Session in Window Rock, Ariz.

Born in the Tsaile-area on December 1, 1952, he spent much of his career before his election working for the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority. Asked to serve his people, Delegate BeGaye began his service in 2003 on the 20th Navajo Nation Council.

In an emotional, though strong farewell speech, Delegate BeGaye presented himself as the same hooghan-born man he was when he walked into the chamber 16 years ago, wearing a jacket, shirt, tie, Wranglers, and brand-new boots.

He credits much of his success to his wife, Linda, and the strong support of his constituents.

"I have worked hard to bring the best to the members of my chapters," Delegate BeGaye stated.

In recounting the highlights of his career, Delegate BeGaye recalled driving down US 491 and seeing pipe being laid into the ground as a part of the San Juan River Water Rights



Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye speaks before his Council colleagues announcing his retirement July 15, 2019 in the Council Chamber.

Settlement. Seeing the physical implementation of the water rights approval legislation he sponsored struck a chord.

“I had to pull off the highway and just look at it,” stated Delegate BeGaye.

Additionally, as Vice Chair of the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee Síhasin Fund Subcommittee, Delegate BeGaye helped oversee the development of the \$180 million Bulk Water and Waste Water Expenditure Plan (CJA-12-16).

Several delegates expressed their appreciation for Delegate BeGaye for championing the 2005 Diné Natural Resources Protection Act, which placed a moratorium on uranium mining on the Navajo Nation.

He also spoke of the rocky days after the market crash in 2008. As a member of the Navajo Nation Investment Committee, he and the Investment Committee brought back the Nation’s total trusts from approximately \$600 million to well over \$2 billion today.

One colleague earned special recognition from Delegate BeGaye, Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tséahnáoz’t’í). Before her election to the Council, she served as Delegate BeGaye’s legislative district assistant.

“And here she is reelected. I’m so proud,” Delegate BeGaye stated.

“The depth of knowledge that Delegate BeGaye brought to this Council is immense,” said Delegate Crotty. “Ahéhee’, delegate, for giving us your leadership and vision.”

Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí’, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) introduced Delegate BeGaye before he spoke before the Council.

“Even though he is still a young man, this gentleman is an elder statesman of the Navajo Nation,” stated Speaker Damon. “One of my first memories on the Council was Delegate BeGaye’s mentorship and soft, sturdy, and compassionate leadership. I can’t wait to see what Delegate BeGaye accomplishes in his next act in life. He will be missed, though we know he’ll always be near.”

Referencing past strong leadership that contributed to the resilience and strength of the Navajo Nation, Delegate BeGaye stated, “Let’s journey together.”

Across his career, Delegate BeGaye has served on the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, Budget and Finance Committee, and the Síhasin Fund Subcommittee.

Upon the declaration of vacancy from the Navajo Nation Election Administration, a special election will be held for Delegate BeGaye’s seat. An individual may be appointed by Speaker Damon in the interim before the special election.

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