



Joint Press Release

Navajo Nation Office
of the President and the Vice President
and Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker



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NAVAJO NATION OPPOSES BIA REORGANIZATION AND THE REASSIGNMENT OF CURRENT NAVAJO BIA REGIONAL DIRECTOR

WINDOW ROCK — The Navajo Nation strongly objects to the U.S. Department of the Interior’s planned reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and strongly opposes the reassignment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo Regional director Sharon Pinto.

The Navajo Nation issued its official position through the unanimous passage of two separate resolutions by the Navajo Nation Council on April 18, citing the failure of the U.S. Department of the Interior to uphold the requirements and principal of government-to-government consultation and the department’s arbitrary and unilateral decision to reassign Pinto, a member of the Navajo Nation, in total disregard for the input, consultation, or concerns of the Navajo Nation.

“As the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Navajo Regional Director, Sharon Pinto has been an invaluable ally to the Navajo Nation. Her assistance has been critical in converting the status of fee land to trust land, and in partnering with the Nation on an MOU to develop an Integrated Resource Management Plan that addresses the infrastructure in the Former Bennett Freeze Area,” stated President Russell Begaye. “The BIA isn’t just another federal agency. They play an important role in fulfilling the statutory, treaty-based and policy-based trust obligations the U.S. has to Indian tribes. Pinto’s experience in her position is important in developing partnerships between the BIA and the Navajo Nation.”

Members of the Navajo Nation Council adamantly spoke in opposition to the reassignment of Pinto on Tuesday, during the Spring Council Session. Many of the Council members recalled specific projects that Pinto assisted with over the last seven years that she has served as the director of the Navajo BIA Regional Office – often going above and beyond to help navigate through federal policies and requirements for the benefit of thousands of Navajo families and communities.

Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council LoRenzo Bates, said the leadership of the Navajo Nation stands united and looks to the Department of the Interior to meet with Navajo leadership to discuss the two matters as soon as possible.

“The Navajo Nation Council will not idly stand by while the federal government again decides what is in our best interest. Only the Navajo Nation knows what is best for the Navajo Nation, keeping Ms. Pinto as the Navajo Area Director is best for the Navajo Nation,” stated Speaker Bates.

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