



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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President Begaye's line-item vetoes appears to mislead the Navajo people and programs

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T'iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) informed President Russell Begaye that his line-item veto actions regarding the Navajo Nation fiscal year 2018 Comprehensive Budget are misleading and confusing, which could jeopardize the Nation's responsibility to Navajo Citizens and communities.

President Begaye denied funding that would affect Navajo elders, the Nation's 110 chapters, grazing and land board officials, housing renovations at each Navajo chapter area, and several employees and programs working for the Navajo Nation.

On Sept. 30, President Begaye used the presidential line item authority to deny funding for essential programs that provides operations and services for Navajo senior centers, chapters, grazing and land board officials, veterans, the Judicial Branch, and the Legislative Branch, while ignoring the needs and recommendations voiced by the Nation's programs during the budget process.

"The line item veto actions displays a thorough misunderstanding of the budget process and it completely ignores the needs of the people, families, communities, and employees of the Navajo Nation. During the budget process, all programs plead and expressed their needs to fulfill their purpose, but the President's line item actions sends a different message and absolutely negates his stance of his four pillars and the recommendations he forwarded to Council as the budget process was taking place," stated Speaker Bates.

Speaker Bates added that President Begaye's justification of the line item actions were confusing, which may be a reflection of his absence at standing committee budget hearings and at the Council Budget Session. Members of the Council considered all the program's input and recommendations without the presence and guidance of the President, said Speaker Bates.

The Office of the Speaker delivered a memo addressed to the Office of the President and Vice President regarding the concerns, and highlighted that the President did not specify a

comprehensive reasoning for vetoing several budget allocations, which did not meet the requirements of Navajo law.

According to the Navajo Nation Code Title 2 Section 1005(C)(11), a “Veto shall be exercised by the President by a letter to the Speaker specifying the reasons for the veto.”

“The unexplained action by the President only causes more confusion on the intent to move the Nation forward. The Council and people should not speculate on the reasons for the President’s line item veto,” said Speaker Bates. “The President took an oath of office to abide by the laws of the Navajo Nation and he should follow those laws and let our people, elders, chapters, and veterans benefit from the peoples’ funds.”

Speaker Bates issued a memorandum to Dominic Beyal, director of the Office of Management and Budget, and Navajo Nation Controller Pearline Kirk, informing them of the President’s questionable line item actions and instructing them to replace the funds in the appropriate accounts that did not have a supporting explanation of the veto per Navajo Nation law.

“The Council plans to meet with President Begaye to discuss the line item vetoes because it affects our constituents, and I anticipate that we will collaborate to address and rectify the issues. I also expect local chapters to respond to the President’s actions on behalf of their communities,” said Speaker Bates.

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