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THE NAVAJO NATION

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Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., responds to statement regarding his veto of the Dine' Marriage Act of 2005

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., today issued a response to an Associated Press news story that reported Navajo Nation Council Delegate Larry Anderson is sponsoring legislation to override his veto of the Dine' Marriage Act of 2005.

“This veto, like any other, is just part of the normal checks and balances afforded to the President on behalf of the Navajo people,” the President said. “If Mr. Anderson wants to seek an override of this veto, that’s certainly his prerogative and the prerogative of the Council. I looked at the legislation and did what I thought was right. And I have not changed my mind.”

The President has reiterated in interviews with the press that this legislation is a people issue as opposed to a government issue. As such, he says it is up to the Navajo people to raise their concern to their government as we’ve seen them do on many other issues. The Navajo Natural Resources Protection Act of 2005, which now bans uranium mining and processing, and a Navajo Nation Council resolution calling for the protection of the sacred *Dook’o’oosliid* are two most recent examples of the people’s expression signed into law from the spring session of the Navajo Nation Council.

The Office of the President and Vice President has received *not* a single e-mail or telephone call that opposed the President’s veto of the Dine’ Marriage Act – including from Mr. Anderson. To the contrary, OPVP received an unprecedented number of unsolicited e-mails and telephone calls in support of the President’s veto, of the reasons he stated for vetoing the legislation, and thanking him for the veto.

Mr. Anderson posits his statement to the press by saying the President “argues” his reasons for vetoing the legislation. More accurately, the President simply stated his reasons in a letter to the Speaker of the council and has not engaged in polemics, as Mr. Anderson states.

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His reasons, stated clearly and simply to the Speaker and reported widely in the press, need no further clarification, and none has been sought by anyone other than Mr. Anderson in his own statement on the issue.

Mr. Anderson alleges that the President's veto of this legislation represents an abuse of the veto power and necessitates a re-evaluation of the President's veto power.

More accurately, the Presidential veto represents one of many long-established government checks and balances on behalf of the people. Accusing President Shirley of abusing his power in this instance would be similar to accusing the Navajo Supreme Court of abuse of power simply for ruling in a way that did not favor a particular Council Delegate or the Navajo Nation Council. Therefore, it's a self-serving assertion.

The President vetoed two pieces of legislation and signed five into law that were passed by the Navajo Nation Council during its 2005 spring session. Had he vetoed all seven pieces of legislation, or had he vetoed all legislation every time, perhaps that could constitute an abuse of power in the eyes of the legislative branch but, in fact, might not constitute an actual abuse of power.

So, in this instance, for a Council Delegate to accuse the President of an abuse of power because he vetoed legislation the delegate sponsored shows more of a lack of statesmanship on the part of the delegate than an abuse of power by the President.

Finally, Mr. Anderson states at the beginning of his statement to the press, "The President vetoed this legislation simply because it is not necessary." In this, he is correct.

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